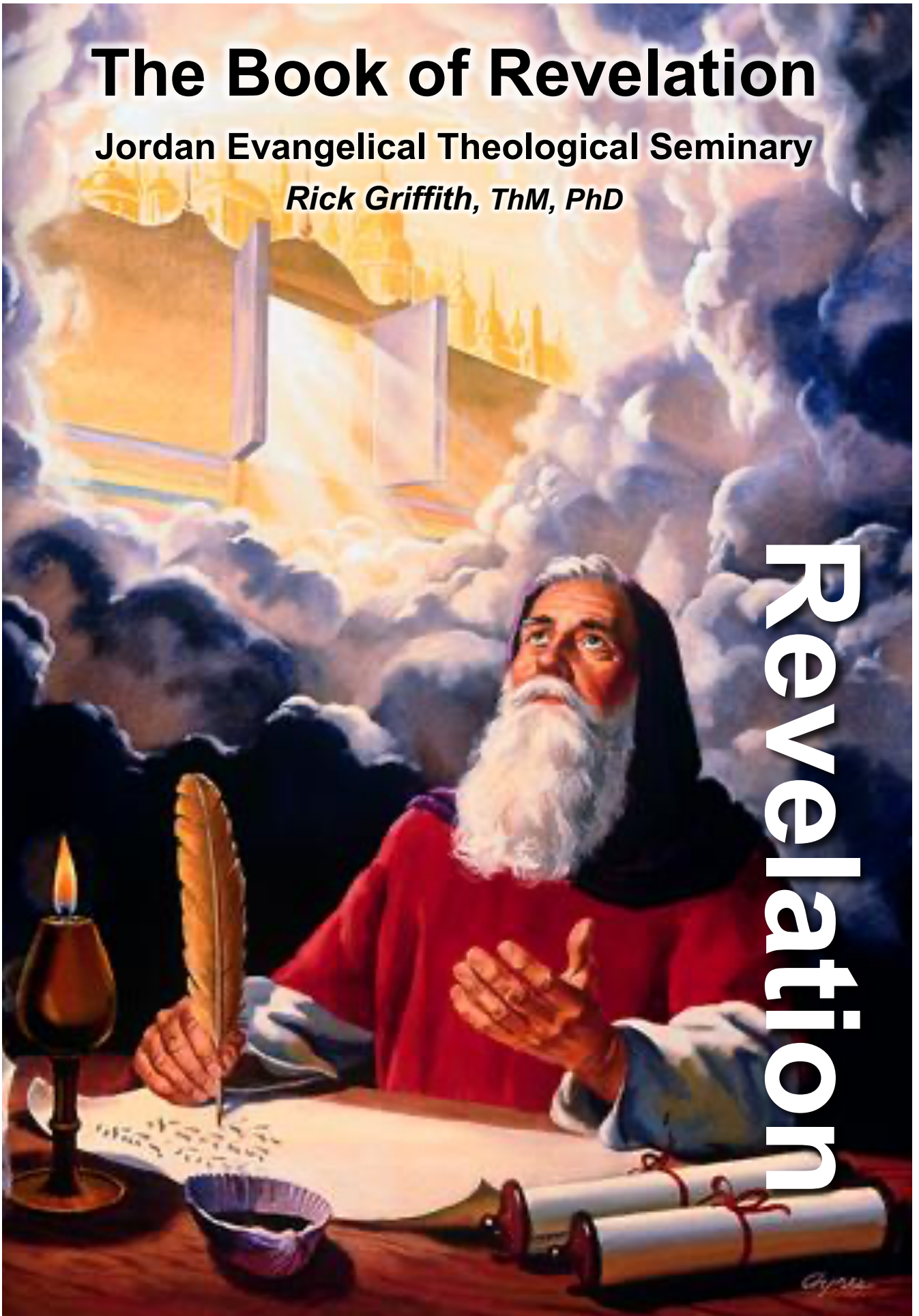


The Book of Revelation

Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary

Rick Griffith, ThM, PhD

Revelation



Revelation

The Sovereignty of Christ in Future Victory

Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary

Rick Griffith, ThM, PhD

Download these notes and 3758 accompanying PowerPoint slides for free on the [NT Survey](#) and [NT Preaching](#) links at [BibleStudyDownloads.org](#). It also links to slides for this course in [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Indonesian](#), [Mongolian](#), and [Vietnamese](#).

Thirty-First Edition

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1st-29th printings (2045 NT Survey + 487 Rev = 2532 copies; 1st-30th eds. Jan 2011-Mar 2025)



Rome

Asian Churches

2. External Persecution from Rome (1:9; 2:9-10; 3:10)

1. Internal Struggles inside churches (2:4, 14-15, 21-24; 3:1, 15-17)

What did John see around him?

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I. Professor

Rick and Susan served for 30 years in Singapore from 1991-2021 where Rick taught leaders from 21 countries based at Singapore Bible College. This included 73 teaching trips in most Asian nations to train poor pastors who could not come to Singapore. They also started an international school and church. But in 2021, they shifted to Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary in Amman, Jordan. Now, they invest in students from 21 other nations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and many other countries by teaching at Amman International Church. Their three married sons live with their wives and three grandkids in WA, CO, and CA. Dr. Rick's website at BibleStudyDownloads.org now has 387,000 PowerPoint slides in 43 courses of Bible materials in 54 languages! After developing the Chinese resources for decades, he shifted to Arabic, which now has nearly 88,000 PPT slides and handouts to train Arab leaders.

II. Scope

While the background in Daniel, Ezekiel, and other prophetic books would be invaluable, this 2-hour course focuses only on the book of Revelation. The course proceeds sequentially through the 22 chapters of Revelation, beginning with the glorious appearance of Christ, his letters to the churches, heaven's throne room, and the judgments of the Tribulation. It concludes with the return of Christ, millennial rule, great white throne judgment, and eternity in the new heavens and new earth. Due to time constraints, we will primarily address the dispensational view with limited interaction with other opinions on the book.

III. Purpose

Few of us read a book through and then neglect to read the last chapter. But many do just that with the Bible. They avoid reading the book of Revelation due to its strange visions and symbols. Ironically, the word "revelation" means "unveiling" and yet this book remains the most veiled of them all. This course will help you see the chronological arrangement of this prophecy so you can interpret its message correctly. The focus of the book is the sovereignty and final victory of Jesus Christ, so our study will help you develop in your relationship with Him in all His glory. The course is immensely important in the Word of Life curriculum as it shows the end to which all of history points.

IV. Objectives

By the end of the course you should be able to ...

1. Understand the background to Revelation in terms of authorship, occasion, recipients, date, unique characteristics, etc.
2. Critique the four major interpretive approaches to the book of Revelation to properly understand prophetic literature.
3. Explain the key themes of the book: the sovereignty of Christ in future victory, external persecution and internal compromise in the church in light of the glorified Christ, the justice and mercy of God, and worship in view of history ending with Christ as King.
4. Trace the basic three-fold outline of the book with its climax in the return of Christ (Rev 19).
5. Apply the strengths and weaknesses of the seven churches of Revelation 2-3.
6. Understand the basic flow of the judgments in the Tribulation Period (seals, trumpets, and bowls, with supplementary data).
7. Show how the Tribulation and Millennium fit into the plan and purpose of God.
8. Defend the premillennial perspective of Revelation 20:1-6.

9. Feel awed at the glory of heaven and the privilege of heaven as our future home!
10. Make any needed changes in your life to appear before Him unashamedly.

Each of the above objectives except the last two is measurable and thus will be assessed on the quizzes and the final exam.

V. Procedures

1. **Reading** from the class notes, Bible (translation of the student's choice), and course text will be required each class day. The main book to read is the Revelation section (87 pages) of Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe Bible Commentary* 2 vols. (Wheaton, IL: SP Pub., Inc., 1989, electronic ed. 1996). This was originally published as *The Bible Exposition Commentary*.
2. **Quizzes** over the reading assignments will be given at the beginning of four sessions. These will be short (15 minutes) with 5-10 objective questions, such as multiple-choice, true-false, matching, and fill-in-the-blank questions. Note that the questions come *only* from the readings, though several issues will also be discussed in class as well. Therefore, be familiar with both the biblical text and also Wiersbe's comments on it.
3. **The Final Exam** will assess your comprehension of the course notes and class discussions only (not the readings). This exam will be a combination of multiple-choice, short answer, fill-in-the-blanks, and matching questions over the entire book of Revelation and the class sessions. You will not be asked about Wiersbe's viewpoint, as the quizzes will already cover this. However, I encourage you to study the quizzes still as these show the most important issues related to the text of Revelation. You will also report on your reading for sessions 18-19.

VI. Grading

1. Reading Revelation	Read 3 times for full credit	=	20 points
Reading Wiersbe/notes	Read 1 time for full credit	=	20 points
2. Quizzes	20 points each x 4 quizzes	=	80 points
3. Final Exam	40 questions given on June 5	=	80 points
Total			200 points

The reading total of 40 points is figured as follows:

The Book of Revelation	three times:	Yes _____	No _____	(20 Points)
	only twice:	_____		(12 Points)
	only once:	_____		(4 Points)
Wiersbe's Commentary & Class Notes		Yes _____	No _____	(20 Points)
	only 75%	_____		(12 Points)
	only 50%	_____		(8 Points)
	only 25%	_____		(4 Points)

VII. Supplemental Bibliography

The required reading of Wiersbe is an excellent starting place to see the text and relevance of the book of Revelation. However, I hope this is only the beginning of your study in this fascinating book, so I have added several other commentaries here, some of which are in the WOLBI library (though the presence of a book in the WOLBI library does not necessarily indicate WOLBI's agreement with the contents). The following commentaries are the best that I know about for Revelation, even though I do not agree with their conclusions. I have listed them in order of preference.

- 1 Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody, 1992, 1995. xxvii+524 pp., xv + 690 pp. *Pretribulationist premillennialist (dispensational); exhaustive (chapters 1–7 are addressed in greater detail than all the commentaries below on the entire Book of Revelation!); interacts with other views (including other premillennial ones) in a fair and very readable manner; evangelical, upholds John's authorship, leans towards lordship salvation view and includes five helpful excursuses (on chapters 2–3, imprecatory prayers, structure of the book, the kingdom of Christ, and the seventh bowl), interacts extensively with the Greek text and evaluates interpretive options. The second volume has four indexes to cover both volumes (subject, ancient literature, modern authors, and Scripture). This second volume appeared when the fate of the Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary was unstable. Since the WEC has transferred to the BEC (Baker Exegetical Commentary), perhaps both of Thomas' volumes will eventually appear under BEC. Thomas teaches NT at Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, California. Unfortunately, Thomas' commentary preceded Beale's major work by four years, so it does not interact with Beale.*
- 2 Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977. 426 pp. \$13.95 hb. *Preterist-futurist and posttribulationist premillennialist, concise introduction, good insights into Greek text (textual problems, word studies), fair with opposing viewpoints (except a few unjustified comments about dispensationalists), good interpretation of apocalyptic material and widely diverse bibliography. Believes that only the martyrs of the final tribulation will enter the millennium, and the millennium itself may not be a literal, earthly reign (p. 136). Mounce wrote while Dean of the Potter College of Arts and Humanities at Western Kentucky University. He has a newer, more popular treatment of Revelation called What are We Waiting For? (Eerdmans, 1992).*
- 3 Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago: Moody, 1966. 350 pp. *Pretribulationist premillennialist (dispensational), short but exhaustive introduction addressing authorship and date, inspiration and canonicity, interpretation, apocalyptic character, symbolism, and theology; readable style with Greek terms explained, unites interpretation with OT prophetic concepts and deals fairly with opposing viewpoints; good companion to Mounce's volume. Walvoord was Chancellor of Dallas Seminary and died in 2002.*
- 4 Beale, Gregory K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1999. 1245 pp. *Amillennial (pp. 972-1021) and views the book of Revelation from an Eclectic or Redemptive-Historical form of modified idealism; interprets from the Greek, OT and Jewish exegetical traditions and due to its comprehensiveness and scholarship has become the standard amillennial work on Revelation. Unfortunately, Beale interacts only with Thomas' first volume (Rev. 1–7) even though Thomas' second volume was published four years before Beale. He has taught at Westminster Theological Seminary since 2010.*
- 5 Beasley-Murray, George R. *The Book of Revelation*. New Century Bible Commentary. London: Oliphants, 1974; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978. \$7.95 pb. *Preterist-futurist and premillennial (pp. 287-97), good treatment of apocalyptic literature, recommended by Moisés Silva.*
- 6 Ladd, George Eldon. *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972. 308 pp. *Preterist-futurist and posttribulationist premillennialist (similar eschatologically to Mounce), good exposition and outline around John's four visions, good word studies. Ladd taught NT at Fuller Seminary from 1950 until his death in 1982.*

- 7 Aune, David E. *Revelation 17–22*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Nelson, 1998. *Premillennial* (pp. 1084, 1104-8).
- 8 Swete, Henry Barclay. *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices*. London/New York: Macmillan, 1906; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel. *Historicist* (sees book depicting the persecution of Emperor Domitian in AD 90s), *exegetical* (Greek) commentary, long introduction dealing with 18 different items, helpful in studying OT roots for words; deals with textual problems, grammatical constructions, and apocalyptic backgrounds; synthesis weak but good on individual verses and very dated.
- 9 Johnson, Alan F. "Revelation." In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12: Hebrews—Revelation. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981. Pp. 399-603. *Pretribulational premillennialist, the best commentary in this volume, careful, clear, interactive with other views, concise bibliography of key works broken down into interpretive views* (pp. 412-13). Johnson is Professor of Bible and Theology at Wheaton College.
- 10 Caird, G. B. *Revelation*. Black's New Testament Commentary. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993. (Originally published under Harper's New Testament Commentaries. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.) *Preterist, helpful on apocalyptic*.
- 11 Wilcock, Michael. *The Message of Revelation*. (See also the title *I Saw Heaven Opened*.) The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1984. *Homiletical*.
- 12 Smith, J. B. *A Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Ed. J. Otis Yoder. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1961. *Pretribulational premillennialist (dispensational), fairly lengthy introduction, straightforward exposition based on Greek, good word studies and 22 appendices, but virtually no interaction with other commentators on Revelation*.
- 13 Hendricksen, William. *More Than Conquerors*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1940; reprint 1967; reprint 1982. 216 pp. *Idealist amillennial conservative, a standard work of the past generation but still used somewhat today*.

VIII. Schedule (Reading Report for 20 May – 2 June 2020)

Name _____ # _____ Reading Grade _____ Course Grade _____

Please tick the last column if completed in full on time and then summarize this at the bottom.

Session	Day	Subject	Readings	X
1	W 5/20	Introduction & the Glorified Christ (Rev. 1)	None	
2	W 5/20	• Characteristics	None	
3	W 5/20	• Interpretation & Views on the Prophecy	Read Rev. 1–22	
4	Th 5/21	• Rev 1, Chronology, & the 70 th Week	Wiersbe, chap. 1 on Rev. 1	
5	Th 5/21	Quiz 1 on Sessions 1-4 Readings Jesus Writes the Churches (Rev. 2–3)	Study for Quiz 1	
6	Th 5/21	• Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum (Rev. 2)		
		• Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea (Rev. 3)	Wiersbe, chaps. 2-3 on Rev. 2–3	
7	F 5/22	Heaven, Seals & Trumpets (Rev. 4–14)	Read Rev. 1–3 Class notes, 474-84 on Preterism	
8	F 5/22	Quiz 2 on Sessions 6-7 Readings (Not Preterism)	Study for Quiz 2 (7 churches only)	
9	F 5/22	• Heaven & Seals (Rev. 4–7)	Read Rev. 4–11	
10	W 5/27	• Trumpets (Rev. 8–11)	Wiersbe, chaps. 4-7 on Rev. 4–11	
11	W 5/27	• Satan’s Activity (Rev. 12–14)	Read Rev. 1–22; Class notes, 487-503 on History of Interpretation	
12	W 5/27	Quiz 3 on Sessions 9-11 Readings Bowls, Babylon, Return & Rule (Rev. 15–20)	Study for Quiz 3 Wiersbe, chaps. 8-9 on Rev. 12–16	
13	Th 5/28	• Bowls (Rev. 15–16)	Read Rev. 12–20	
14	Th 5/28	• Babylon (Rev. 17–18)	Wiersbe, chap. 10 on Rev. 17–18 Class notes, 397-413	
15	Th 5/28	• Christ’s Return (Rev. 19)	Wiersbe, chap. 11 part on Rev. 19	
16	F 5/29	• Millennium (Rev. 20:1-6)	Wiersbe, chap. 11 part on Rev. 20 Class notes, 421-435	
17	F 5/29	• Gog & Magog, Judgment (Rev. 20:7-15)	Class notes, 436-43	
18	F 5/29	The New Jerusalem (Rev. 21–22)	Read Rev. 21–22	
19	T 6/2	Quiz 4 on Sessions 12-17 Readings	Study for Quiz 4 Class notes, 444-72, 504-7	
20	T 6/2	Conclusion	Wiersbe, chap. 12 on Rev. 21–22 Submit this sheet	
21		Final Exam	Study for Final Exam	

The reading total of 40 points is figured as follows:

The Book of Revelation	three times: Yes _____ No _____ (20 Points)
	only twice: _____ (12 Points)
	only once: _____ (4 Points)

Wiersbe’s Commentary & Class Notes	Yes _____ No _____ (20 Points)
	only 75% _____ (12 Points)
	only 50% _____ (8 Points)
	only 25% _____ (4 Points)

1. Reading Revelation	Read 3 times for full credit (possible 20 points)	= _____
Reading Wiersbe/notes	Read 1 time for full credit (possible 20 points)	= _____
2. Quizzes (20 points each)	Quiz 1 _____ + Quiz 2 _____ + Quiz 3 _____ + Quiz 4 _____	= _____
3. Final Exam	40 questions (possible 80 points)	= _____
Total	Possible 200 points	= _____

I ask if you have read “Rev. 1–21” twice so do not think of these as typos. If you follow this schedule properly, then you will read the entire book of Revelation three times: twice at one sitting (for Wednesday this week and Tuesday next week) and once in sections as we proceed through the course.

Note that the dark horizontal lines separate the course by days but the sessions that are quizzed are different sessions. For example, Quiz 1 in session 4 will cover sessions 1-3 and session 5, even though session 5 is listed after Quiz 1.

Please submit page 5 or a photocopy of it once you have completed your reading, or at the latest on Friday next week.

My Biographical Sketch



The Griffith Family

Kurt & Cara (38) & Kadon (2), Stephen & Katie (35) with Jesse (5) & Norah (3), John & Chloe (32)

Background

“Never say ‘never.’” Rick and Susan Griffith both learned this age-old tip the hard way.

Rick recalls sitting in his elementary school classes thinking, “If there’s one thing I’ll *never* become, it’s being a *teacher*. Imagine saying the same stuff over and over, year after year!”

Yet after trusting Christ in junior high and beginning to teach the Word of God, Rick’s attitude changed. After his business degree at California State University, East Bay, a Master of Theology degree (Pastoral Ministries), and a Doctor of Philosophy degree (Bible Exposition) from Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas, Dr. Griffith soon found himself on the other end of the classroom—and loving it!

From Yucaipa, California, Susan also learned not to say “never.” As she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in piano at Biola University, several friends married and worked to put their husbands through three more years of seminary training. “I’ll *never* do that!” she exclaimed. Soon afterward, she invested three years (1981-1983) singing with her future husband in the Crossroads, Campus Crusade’s traveling music team in Asia. This nine-member Philippines-based group shared Christ in the Philippines, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Macau, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

In December 1983, Susan’s “never” became a reality. She and Rick were married and like Jacob and Rachel of old, Susan also worked for her mate. During these seven seminary years, Rick served as a pastor, corporate chaplain, and International Students church consultant. Susan taught women’s Bible studies and often ministered by singing. Their primary church in Texas is Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth.

They have three sons: Kurt (38 yrs.) works in IT with his business analysis wife Cara in Seattle at their HR consulting firm Tandem Motion, Stephen is a United B777 pilot trainer (35 yrs.) with his counselor wife Katie in Denver with two grandkids (2019 & 2021), and John (Griff) and his wife Chloe work in IT graphic design in California (32 yrs.), respectively.

Ministry

From 1991-2021, the Griffith home was in Singapore, where Rick served as Doctor of Ministry director with 26 other full-time faculty at Singapore Bible College. SBC has 495 students from 26 countries and 25 denominations, as well as many professionals. He began by teaching Old and New Testament Survey, Old and New Testament Backgrounds, Eschatology (the study of future things), Evangelism, Pastoral Epistles, Psalms, Homiletics (preaching), Hebrew Exegesis, and four Old Testament exposition courses. Then, for years, he also taught Pentateuch, Gospels, Eschatology (theology of the future), Ecclesiology (theology of the church), and Pneumatology (theology of the Holy Spirit). In recent years, he mostly taught Bible Exposition classes, including Homiletics, OT Foundations, and OT & NT Survey. He also wrote three Advanced Studies in the Old and New Testament courses at Internet Biblical Seminary (www.internetseminary.org).

Dr. Griffith loves the variety and strategic nature of his teaching. He has invested his life into Anglicans from Sri Lanka, Lutherans from Singapore, Presbyterians from Korea, Conservative Baptists from the Philippines, and missionaries from Campus Crusade, OMF, and Operation Mobilisation—sometimes all in one class! One class had 17 of the 20 students training for ministry outside of Singapore. Nearly all SBC graduates entered pastoral or missionary ministries due to Asia's shortage of trained leaders.

Ministry opportunities abound. Over the years, Rick and Susan conducted premarital counseling for students with their home's open door to students and guests traveling through Singapore. In 1992, they also helped start International Community School, an expatriate Christian K-12 school in Singapore now with more than 400 students. WorldVenture has seconded them to these organizations over the years.

Dr. Griffith also enjoys several other partnerships. He also serves as Translation Coordinator for "The Bible...Basically International" seminars; web author & editor, Internet Biblical Seminary; and itinerate professor for 73 trips throughout Asia and the Middle East at Lanka Bible College (Sri Lanka), Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Union Bible Training Center (Mongolia), and Biblical Education by Extension training in three restricted access countries. In 2021, he joined Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary as a Professor of Bible Exposition and has been Academic Dean since 2024.

Dr. Rick also began Crossroads International Church, Singapore, where "Pastor Rick" served as pastor-teacher from 2006-2021. See CICFamily.com.

In 2009, Dr. Rick began BibleStudyDownloads.org to offer free courses for download. It has 46,000 pages of course notes in Word and pdf, over 109,000 English PowerPoint slides, and 380,000 PowerPoint slides translated by 800 students into 54 languages, such as Albanian, Ao Naga, Arabic (84,000 slides), Bangla, Bisaya, Burmese, Chin Tedim, Chiru, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Ilonggo, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kachin, Karen, Khmer, Kiswahili, Korean, Liangmai, Lotha, Malay, Malayalam, Mao, Mizo, Mongolian, Moyon, Nepali, Nias, Norwegian, Paite Chin, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Rongmei, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish, Sumi Naga, Swedish, Tagalog, Tamil, Tangkhul, Tenyidie, Thai, Ukrainian, Vaiphei, and Vietnamese.

Field

Jordan is 98% Muslim but promises freedom of religion and has diplomatic ties with Israel. Since its founding in 1991, JETS has trained half of the pastors of Jordan's 60 evangelical churches.

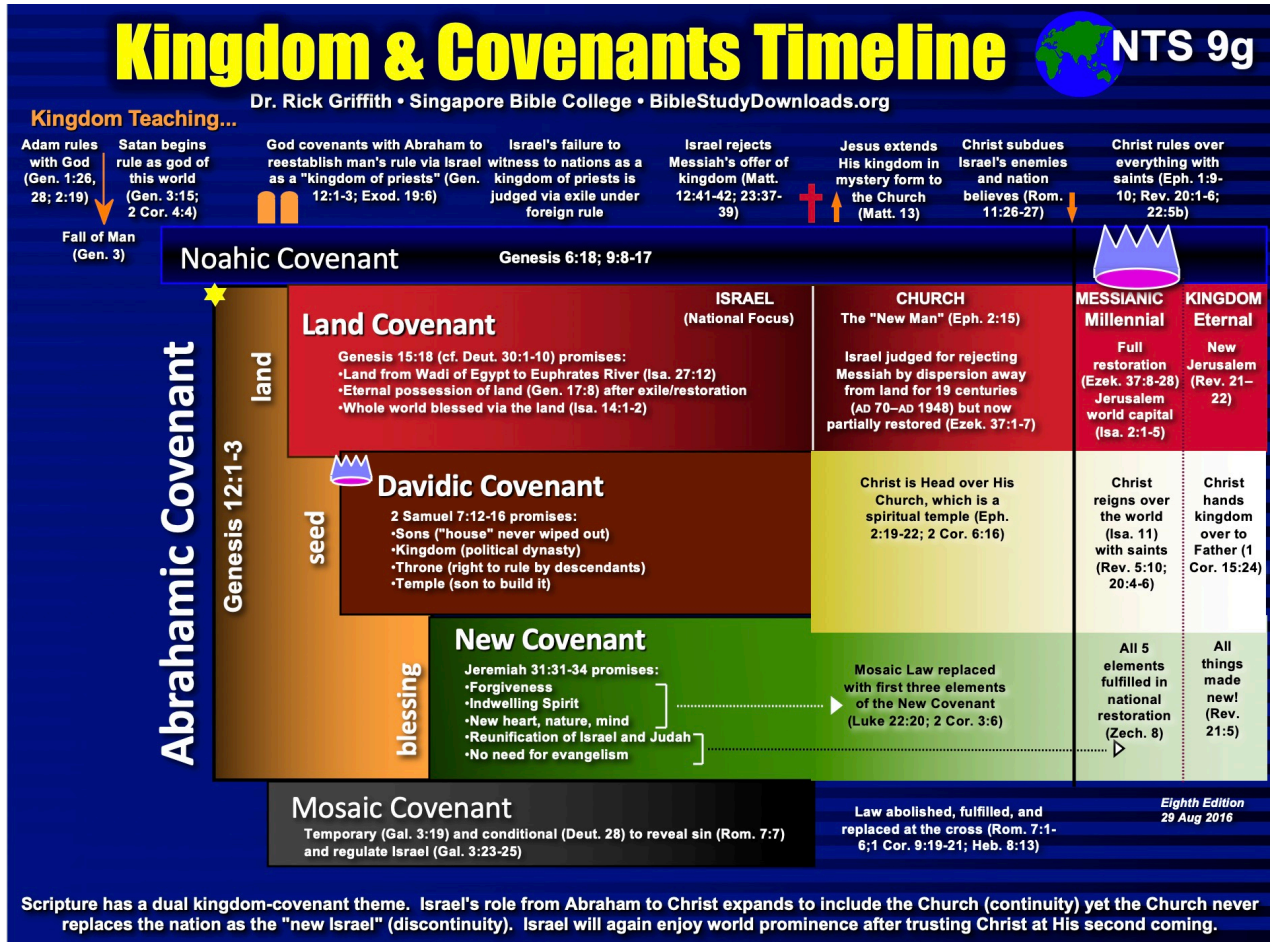
Passion

Rick's passion is for God's leaders to preach and live the Word of God as God's servants:

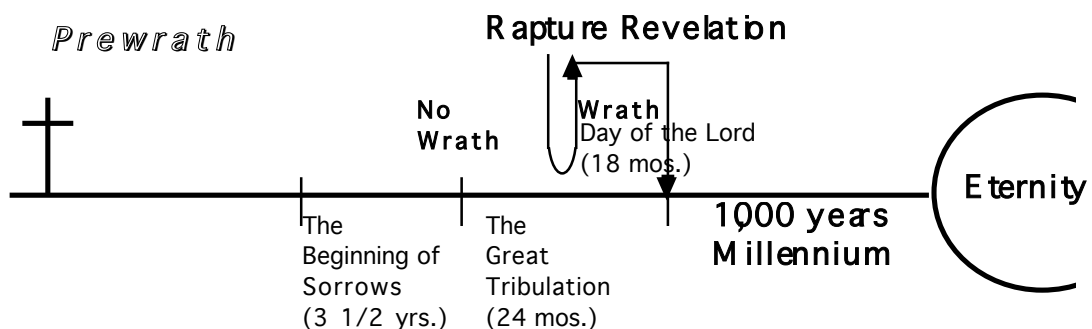
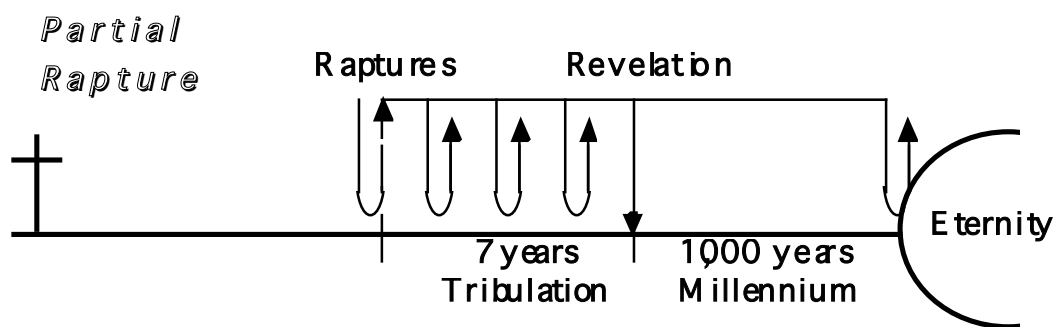
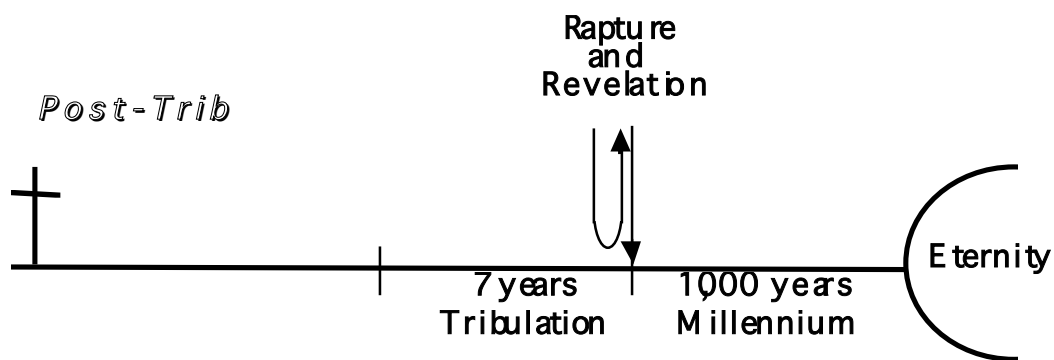
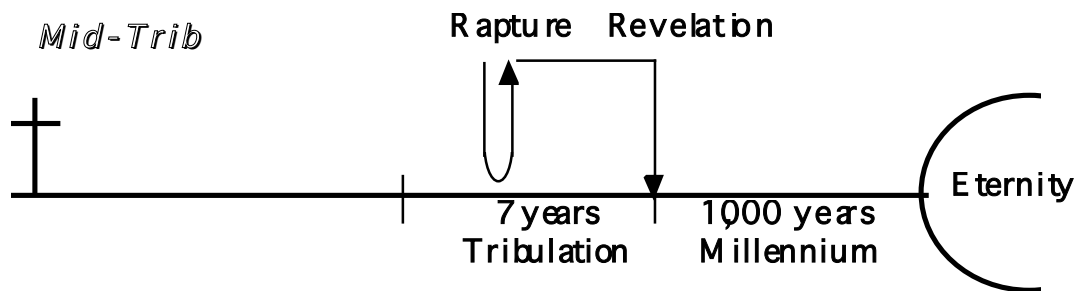
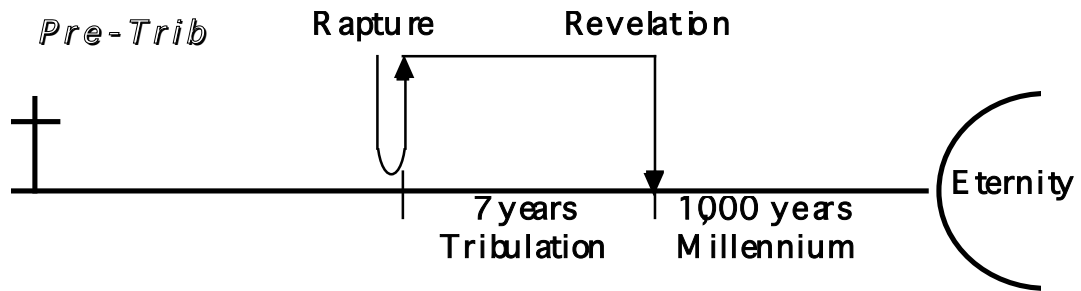
- Teaching obedience to Christ's words is key to our commission to make disciples (Matt 28:20).
- Paul's legacy to Timothy focused on exposition: "Preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2-3; cf. Acts 6:1-16).

However, recent trends include the following:

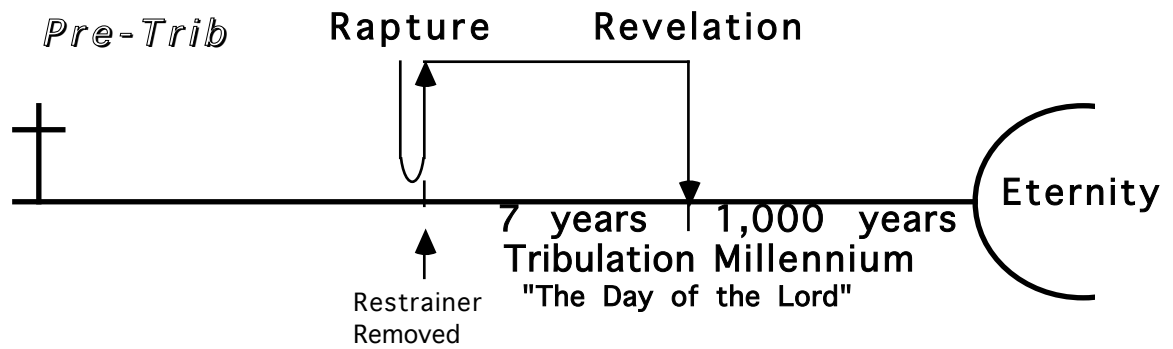
- Christians are biblically illiterate due to a "famine for hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11).
- Attempting to be "relevant," pastors preach what people want to hear—not what they need.



Views on the Time of the Rapture



Arguments for a Pretribulational Rapture



Pretribulationists teach that the Rapture of the Church will precede the Tribulation. Why?

1. Christ told the Philadelphia believers, “I will keep you from the hour of testing (*καὶ γὰρ σε τηρήσω ἐκ τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ*), that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10). The definite article before “hour” indicates that the Tribulation period is in view (cf. Rev. 4–19).
2. The nature and purpose of the Tribulation is to test “those who dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10b), a phrase used over a dozen times in the Book of Revelation. Each time this “phrase occurs... the *enemies* of the church are always in mind” (Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 120, emphasis mine). Since the Church is not to be tested, why would the Church be present during this time of testing?
3. The Holy Spirit’s work of restraining evil will be absent in the Tribulation. His restraining ministry is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (Gen. 6:3; John 16:8-11). It is hard to conceive of a period when the Spirit’s restraining influence will be curtailed with the Church still present.
4. There is no mention of the Church in Revelation 4–19, the portion of this book relating to the Tribulation. Rather, the church (the “tabernacle of God”) is in heaven (Rev. 13:6; cf. Eph. 2:21-22) as Bride (19:1, 7-8) ready to return to the earth at Christ’s Second Coming.
5. The Church will never come under God’s wrath (John 5:24; Rom. 5:9; 8:1; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). Although the church has been promised persecution and tribulation (John 16:33; Acts 5:41; Phil. 1:29), this is different from the wrath that describes the Tribulation (Rev. 6:15-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19). Wrath and persecution are not the same!
6. Since the Rapture is imminent it must be pretribulational. Christians are not to wait for signs of his return but for his coming itself. The New Testament teaches that the next event on God’s eschatological calendar is an imminent Rapture:
 - a. “For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night... so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober... and build up one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thess. 5:2-11). This means the day of the Lord (that begins after the Rapture and continues through the Millennium) was imminent so that it would take people by surprise. Paul told the Thessalonians to fight “sleep” (spiritual lethargy) to prepare for Christ’s unexpected arrival.
 - b. Jesus told the disciples, “I will come back and take you to be with me...” (John 14:3) by actually using the present tense (“I am coming”). This shows a sense of the immediate future without any intervening signs (Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times* [Chicago: Moody, 1969], 96-97).
 - c. Other New Testament texts teach that Christ will come to receive his saints to himself before the Tribulation (James 5:8-9; Tit 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 1 John 2:28; 3:2-3; Rev. 22:10,12).

7. The Second Coming of Christ will be in two distinct stages:

	The Rapture	The Revelation (Second Coming)
1	Pretribulational (Rev. 3:10)	Posttribulational (Rev. 19:11-21)
2	Christ will <u>come in the air</u> (1 Thess. 4:16)	Christ will <u>come to the earth</u> , His feet touching the Mt. of Olives (Zech 14:4)
3	A coming <u>for</u> the saints (John 14:1-2; 1 Thess. 4:15-17)	A coming <u>with</u> the saints (Matt. 25:31; 1 Thess. 3:13; Rev. 19:14)
4	<u>Saints</u> (dead and alive) will be <u>caught up</u> ("raptured") from the earth to meet the Lord in the air and taken to heaven (1 Thess. 4:16-17)	<u>Saints</u> already on earth will <u>remain on the earth</u> (no Rapture) to be ushered into the Millennium (Acts 15:16; Rev. 5:10; cf. Matt. 6:10; chap. 24)
5	Produces <u>comfort and hope</u> (1 Thess. 4:18)	Produces <u>fear and judgment</u> (Matt. 24:27-31; Luke 21:20-28; Rev. 6:15-17)
6	<u>Mystery</u> truth revealed only in the New Testament age (1 Cor 15:51)	<u>Central</u> in OT prophecy but clarified in the NT (Jer. 30:7; Zech 14:1-3; Matt. 24:30; Col. 3:4)
7	Bodies of church saints <u>glorified</u> (1 Cor 15:51-58; Phil. 3:20-21) and brought to heaven for seven years (1 Thess. 4:17)	Bodies of tribulation saints left in <u>mortal</u> state to continue to live on the earth in the millennium (Matt. 25:31-34)
8	<u>Imminent</u> , no signs needed (1 Thess. 4:16)	<u>Not imminent</u> but preceded by spectacular signs in the heavens and on the earth (Matt. 24:29-31; Luke 21:25-28; Acts 2:19-21; Rev. 1:7; Rev 6-19)
9	Primary purpose is <u>deliverance</u> of the saints from this world (1 Thess. 1:10)	Primary purpose is <u>judgment</u> of unbelieving (Matt. 25:31-46)
10	<u>Invisible</u> and private as only believers see Christ and since God sends a powerful delusion through the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:11)	<u>Visible</u> and public since "every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7)
11	Fulfills a promise to the <u>Church</u> where Jew-Gentile distinctions do not exist (1 Thess. 4:15; cf. John 14:1-3; Eph. 2:11-16)	Fulfills promises to <u>Israel</u> of covenants made in the Old Testament (Gen. 12:1-3; Ps. 89; Isa. 11:11-14; cf. Rom. 11:26-27)
12	Evil begins to increase (2 Thess. 2:1-12)	Evil is <u>suppressed</u> (2 Thess. 1:7; Ps. 37:9-10)
13	<u>Church</u> removed (1 Thess. 4:13-18)	<u>Satan</u> removed (Rev. 20:1-3)
14	Christ shown as <u>Head</u> of the Church and all things (Eph. 1:10, 22; 4:15; Col. 1:18; 2:10)	Christ vindicated as <u>Messiah</u> to Israel (Zech. 14:3-4; cf. Acts 1:6 with v. 11)
15	Judgment seat of Christ for <u>believers</u> follows (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:13)	Judgment of <u>Israel and Gentiles</u> follows (Ezek. 20:34-38; Matt. 25; Zech. 14:4; cf. p. 160)
16	The <u>Lord</u> is at hand—imminency (Phil. 4:5)	The <u>kingdom</u> is at hand—afterwards (Matt. 24:14)
17	Nature subsequently <u>ruined</u> (Rev. 6–16)	Nature subsequently <u>restored</u> (Rom. 8:19-22; Isa. 11:6-9; 35:9; 65:25)

Revelation

Sovereignty of Christ in Future Victory									
Sovereignty in His Person			Sovereignty over Churches		Sovereignty in End-Time Events				
Chapter 1			Chapters 2–3		Chapters 4–22				
“What you have seen” (1:19a)			“What is now” (1:19b)		“What will take place later” (1:19c)				
Past			Present		Future				
Christ Unveiled			Churches Unveiled		Consummation Unveiled				
God on Earth			God’s Ambassadors on Earth		Hell on Earth to Heaven on Earth				
The Judge			The Assignments		The Judgments & Rewards				
Subject 1:1-3	Worship of Trinity 1:4-8	Glorified Christ 1:9-20	Seven Churches of Asia: Ephesus Smyrna Pergamum Thyatira Sardis Philadelphia Laodicea		Tribulation 4:1–19:10	Second Coming 19:11-21	Millennium 20	Eternal State 21:1–22:5	Closing: Imminency 22:6-21
Island of Patmos (c. AD 95)									

Key Word: Triumph

Key Verse: “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later” (Revelation 1:19).

Summary Statement: The way to triumph over *internal compromise and external opposition* is to trust the *sovereignty of Jesus Christ* in his ultimate future victory.

Application: Does your life show that you’re on the winning team? Do your goals, values, and disposition show that you represent the Victor of the World?

Revelation

Introduction

I. Title

- A. The Greek title for “Revelation” (Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου *Apocalypse of John*) means “disclosure” (BDAG 92), being the noun form of the verb ἀποκαλύπτω, to “uncover, reveal” (BDAG 92).
- B. What does Revelation reveal? Christians typically think this book primarily reveals the future as if the goal is to satisfy our curiosity about what lies ahead.
- C. However, the title notes that the book unveils the person, power, and program of Jesus Christ (1:1). How should we translate the genitive ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ?
 1. Most translations render 1:1 as “the revelation **of** Jesus Christ” in the sense of revealing who he is (KJV, NIV, NAU, NET). This is the usual meaning of this phrase and is preferred.
 2. However, other translations read “the revelation **from** Jesus Christ” (NLT) to show that Jesus gave the vision. While this is true, it is not the usual meaning of the Greek text.

II. Authorship

A. External Evidence

1. *Earliest Witnesses*: Nearly all true believers since the first century have held that the Apostle John wrote Revelation. These include earliest witnesses such as Justin Martyr in Ephesus (*Dialogue* 81; ca. AD 130) and Irenaeus in Gaul (*Against Heresies*; ca. AD 185). Also citing Johannine authorship were Tertullian, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen (Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 11-14; Guthrie, 934-35).
2. *Opposition*: Some have taught that the author was not the Apostle John. Dionysius of Alexandria (ca. AD 264) questioned his authorship based on linguistic, stylistic, and theological differences between Revelation and John’s Gospel (Guthrie, 935-36). Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.4) affirmed in the fourth century that the author was a certain John the Elder. During the Reformation in the 1500s, Erasmus, Luther, and Zwingli denied Johannine authorship because Revelation teaches a literal 1000-year reign of Christ (Walvoord, *BKC*, 2:925). R. H. Charles also proposed a John the Prophet. One modern scholar even suggests that John the Baptist authored the book (J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, The Anchor Bible, 28-37).
3. *Response*: Nearly all early Church Fathers held to John’s authorship. They saw differences between the Apocalypse and John’s Gospel as negligible and believed in a literal millennium. Since they were closest to the time of the apostles and their statements make good sense, it seems arbitrary to abandon their witness that the writer was John, the apostle of Jesus Christ and author of the Gospel of John and 1-3 John.

B. Internal Evidence

1. The author says he is John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8), servant of Jesus Christ (1:1). The lack of further qualification shows that he maintains great authority typical of the apostle.
2. Many characteristics of the book suggest this is the Apostle John, the brother of James and son of Zebedee (Guthrie, 936-40):
 - a) He knows *details of the history of the churches* of Asia Minor (Rev 2–3).
 - b) Most apocalyptic works named honored ancient man (e.g., Enoch, Ezra), but John *prophesies in his own name* conscious of divine inspiration (1:1, 11, 19; 10:10; 12:6-9).
 - c) Like the Synoptics (Mark 3:17), Revelation depicts John as of a *stormy disposition* as a “son of thunder” who would call Jews worshippers of Satan (2:9; 3:9).

- d) *Common ideas* (e.g., use of contrast), *theology*, and *terminology* (e.g., *logos* in John 1:1; Rev 19:13) exist between the Gospel of John and Revelation.


III. Circumstances

A. Date


1. The traditional view dates the book about AD 95 during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96). John was banished to the small island of Patmos about seventy miles (112 km.) southwest of Ephesus in the Aegean Sea (1:9) and the earliest and weightiest evidence attests to this date in Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5.30.3; cf. Victorinus of Pettau, *Apocalypse* 10.11 (AD 304); Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Dives Salvetur* 42; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.17–18 [AD 260–340]). Other arguments in favor of this view are the imperial persecutions for refusing Emperor worship (the Beast in 13:4, 15f.; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4) and the spiritual decline in the churches that would have been more likely in the AD 90s than earlier.
2. However, dates late in Nero’s reign (AD 66-68) or during the reign of Vespasian (AD 69-79) have also been proposed, but with little evidence (Guthrie, 958-61). Also, the early church father Papias stated that John was martyred with his brother James in AD 44 (Acts 12:1; Walvoord, *BKC*, 2:925; Guthrie, 945). However, the stronger tradition argues that he lived to a ripe old age at Ephesus, which better fits the data in the book of Revelation.
3. Preterists have theorized that the prophecy must have been written before AD 70 since 11:1-2 commands the measuring of the temple. However, this text refers to a literal future temple during the Tribulation. Also, the seventh bowl (16:17–21) does not picture “the great city” as destroyed until after John’s time, so it looked to a future destruction. See the evaluation of the Preterist view in Appendix B (pp. 474-484).

When Did John Write Revelation?


Who was the Roman Emperor then?



Christ
Crucified
AD 33



Jerusalem
Destroyed
AD 70



Revelation
Written
AD 95

Tiberius
14-37

Caligula
37-41

Claudius
41-54

Nero
54-68

Vespasian
69-79

Titus
79-81

Domitian
81-96

Most
preterists
place the
book here

Supported by:
Irenaeus
Victorinus of Pettau
Clement of Alexandria
Eusebius

B. Recipients

1. The immediate destination of the prophecy is the seven churches of the Roman province of Asia (1:4, 11; Rev 2–3): Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. John led this region with its capital at Ephesus.
2. However, the reoccurring phrase “hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (plural) indicates that these churches only represented a much wider Christian audience. This is supported by the fact that the seven churches were neither the only ones in the province nor the largest, as the small towns of Thyatira and Philadelphia could not compare in civic importance with Troas (Acts 20:7f.), Hierapolis and Colossae (Col. 2:1; 4:13, 16). W. M. Ramsay in *The Letters to the Seven Churches* (written in 1904, 468 pp.) discovered that a circular road connected the seven historic churches in the exact order they appear in chapters 2–3. This remains the best explanation why they were chosen as the means to distribute the prophecy to all the churches.



C. Occasion

1. Later first-century churches had both internal and external problems:
 - a) Internal Struggles: Many churches compromised at the end of the first century. Ephesus didn't love Christ (2:4), Pergamum tolerated heresy (2:14-15), Thyatira was immoral (2:21-24), Sardis was dead (3:1), and Laodicea was lukewarm (3:15-17).
 - b) External Persecution: These churches also endured severe testing from the Roman government (1:9; 2:9-10; 3:10). Tradition notes that John was boiled in oil but lived through it.
2. Therefore, John wrote a message of hope describing the ultimate victory of Christ to counter compromise from within and to encourage perseverance amidst hostility from without. As readers see the final future triumph of Christ over evil, they can gain confidence in the present.

IV. Characteristics

- A. Revelation is the climax of biblical revelation, completing the many prophecies of both testaments and providing numerous prophecies of its own. It closes all prophecy by warning like no other NT book not to add or subtract from it (22:18-19; cf. Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Gal. 3:15).
- B. Revelation is the only NT book that deals primarily with the future. Without it, eschatology would lack its clearest descriptions of these events: the Tribulation (Rev 6–18), the second coming of Christ (19:11-21), Satan’s binding and the length of the kingdom as 1000 years (20:1-6), and the great white throne judgment (20:11-15). John continually saw glimpses of the future. In fact, the exact verbal form “I saw” appears 45 times (1:12, 17; 4:1, etc.)!
- C. The book contains more symbolic language than any inspired writing. But why is this? Warren Wiersbe provides *three advantages* to symbolic language (*Bible Exposition Commentary*):
1. Symbols are a “spiritual code” to hide the truth from the unbelieving (cf. parables)
 2. Symbolism is not weakened by time
 3. Symbols not only convey information, but also impart values and arouse emotions
- D. Revelation is the only apocalyptic writing in the New Testament. Apocalyptic literature is characterized by secrecy, pessimism, end times emphases, warnings (not repentance), the triumph of God, determinism (God’s control comforting people), etc.
- E. This book contains more allusions to the OT (250-550 allusions) than any NT writing. Ironically, Revelation also has very few quotes (1:7 quotes Zech. 12:10; 2:27 quotes Ps. 2:9).
- F. Chapters 2–3 record the only letters written by Christ that have been saved for us. This book also is the only NT writing with separate letters for various churches.
- G. This prophecy completes our scriptural understanding about Jesus Christ by including more about his glory than even the Gospels!
- H. Here is the only NT book written in response to a direct command from God (1:10-11, 19). In all other NT writings, the Spirit *prompted* individuals to write rather than directly *telling* them.
- I. Only Revelation was revealed in nearly its entirety as a vision by an angel (1:1). It was also shown to John on a single day—likely a Sunday if “the Lord’s day” denotes Sunday (1:10).
- J. Revelation has more songs than any NT book. Angels break into worship 14 times, making the book a model for worship. It especially parallels Ezekiel in its worship (see next page).

Worship Parallels in Ezekiel & Revelation

Jim Seghers, *The Book of Revelation: Introduction* (<http://totustuus.com/revel.htm>)

Worship imagery abounds in the book. It is the most liturgical of all the New Testament books. Massey Shepherd points out that the book's architecture corresponds to the early Church's worship, which had a predominant Paschal emphasis (Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse*, Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960).

Scholars have also noted the remarkable parallels between the Apocalypse and Ezekiel. This step-by-step pegging of the Book of Revelation with similar passages in Ezekiel is designed for lectionary use in a liturgical service. "In other words, the Book of Revelation was intended from the beginning as a series of readings in worship throughout the Church Year, to be read in tandem with the prophecy of Ezekiel (as well as other Old Testament readings)" (Chilton, p. 22).

Revelation and Ezekiel Parallels:

1. The Throne-vision (Rev 4/Ezek 1)
2. The Book (Rev 5/Ezek 2-3)
3. The Four Plagues (Rev 6:1-8/Ezek 5)
4. The Slain under the Altar (Rev 6:9-11/Ezek 6)
5. The Wrath of God (Rev 6:12-17/Ezek 7)
6. The Seal on the Saint's Foreheads (Rev 7/Ezek 9)
7. The Coals from the Altar (Rev 8/Ezek 10)
8. No More Delay (Rev 10:1-7/Ezek 12)
9. The Eating of the Book (Rev 10:8-11/Ezek 2)
10. The Measuring of the Temple (Rev 11:1-2/Ezek 40-43)
11. Jerusalem and Sodom (Rev 11:8/Ezek 16)
12. The Cup of Wrath (Rev 14/Ezek 23)
13. The Vine of the Land (Rev 14:18-20/Ezek 15)
14. The Great Harlot (Rev 17-18/Ezek 16, 23)
15. The Lament over the City (Rev 18/Ezek 27)
16. The Scavengers' Feast (Rev 19/Ezek 39)
17. The First Resurrection (Rev 20:4-6/Ezek 37)
18. The Battle with Gog and Magog (Rev 20:7-9/Ezek 38-39)
19. The New Jerusalem (Rev 21/Ezek 40-48)
20. The River of Life (Rev 22/Ezek 47)

- K. This is the only book in the Bible that promises a special blessing for reading it (1:3).
- L. Here is the only book written by John that bears his name in the text itself (1:1, 4, 9). Titles to NT books were added later. Note these other differences from his epistles or his gospel:

What books did John write?		
Gospel of John	Epistles	Revelation
<i>Believe</i> 20:22	<i>Be Sure</i> 1 John 5:13	<i>Be Ready</i> 22:20
<i>Life Received</i>	<i>Life Revealed</i>	<i>Life Rewarded</i>
<i>Salvation</i>	<i>Sanctification</i>	<i>Sovereignty</i>
<i>The Prophet</i>	<i>The Priest</i>	<i>The King</i>

Warren Wiersbe,
Bible Exposition Commentary

- M. Revelation alone has its own inspired outline within the text itself (1:19; cf. pp. 318, 340):
1. Past: "What you have seen" (Rev 1:9-20)
 2. Present: "What is now" (Rev 2–3)
 3. Future: "What will take place later" (Rev 4–22)

N. Revelation has more interpretive views than any NT writing. The four major perspectives are (moving from the most radical/non-literal to the most conservative/literal):

1. The **idealist** (allegorical) approach interprets the book as a non-literal, non-historical (timeless) depiction of the triumph of good (God) over evil (Satan). It was most popular during the prominence of the Alexandrian school of theology in the third and fourth centuries but also finds support from modern liberals and evangelicals such as Beale, Hendriksen, and Hughes.

Response: This view ignores the historical context, fails to see that symbols represent real things, has no objective guideline, and contradicts the book's inspired outline in 1:19. Also, apocalyptic literature always symbolized specific events rather than giving general indications of good's triumph over evil as the idealist view advocates.

2. The **preterist** view argues that chapters 2–19 are past, being fulfilled in the church's early history (e.g., during the time of Nero, Domitian, the AD 476 fall of Rome, etc.). Most German scholars, Ellicott, and Peak favored this view. More recent advocates include Jay Adams, Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., George P. Holford, Gary DeMar, Jessie E. Mills, Jr., Don Preston, and Ed Stevens (see p. 351b in these notes).

Response: When were the terrible judgments of chapters 6–19 fulfilled? When in history has there been 75-pound hailstones (16:21) or an army of 200 million (9:16)? This view also goes against the early church fathers in its need to date the book before AD 70, as well as its need to say that Jesus came in the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem. Unlike the worldwide judgments of Revelation, the AD 70 tribulation affected only Jews.

3. The **historicist** view says chapters 4–19 occurred between Christ's first and second advents as a symbolic depiction of the church age (but many, such as Luther, say chapters 2–3 show historical churches). Thus, it portrays Western Europe through various Popes, the Reformation, the French Revolution, and leaders such as Charlemagne and Mussolini. Luther, Ellul, Isaac Newton, and Elliott advanced this view, and amillennialists and postmillennialists are among its present advocates.

Response: This view must spiritualize the 1000-year millennium and literal events. This subjective interpretation of symbols has led to much disagreement in this camp. It also contradicts the scriptural teaching that Christ could come at any moment.

4. The **futurist** interpretation teaches that the events in chapters 4–22 are not yet fulfilled but will occur after the church age. This includes the Tribulation (Rev 4–18) during the last seven years prior to Christ's second coming (Rev 19), after which follows the Millennium and Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20) and finally the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev 21–22). It, too, emphasizes God's final victory. Advocates include Ladd, Mounce, Pate, Hamstra, Walvoord, Thomas, Johnson, Pentecost, Ryrie, Thomas Ice, and Hal Lindsey.

Response: The futurist perspective best correlates with the nature of the events predicted in the prophecy (i.e., takes them at face value) and this method follows the inspired outline of 1:19. It is the approach employed in the following argument and outline.

Summary of Interpretations on the Book of Revelation

View	Millennial View	Rev 1–3	Rev 4–19	Rev 20–22
Idealist Beale Hendriksen Hughes	Postmillennial (or Amillennial)	Historic Churches	Symbolic of the non-historical conflict between <u>good and evil</u>	Victory of good over evil (Church over the world)
Preterist Sweete Ellicott DeMar	Apocalyptic	Historic Churches	Symbolic of Events in <u>First Century</u> (Nero, Mt. Vesuvius eruption)	Symbolic of heaven and victory
Historicist Luther Newton Elliott	Amillennial (or Postmillennial)	Historic Churches	Symbolic of events in the <u>Church Age</u> (fall of Rome, rise of Islam & Catholics, Reformation, etc.)	Present age (amil) or future millennium (postmil), General judgment, heaven
Futurist Thomas Walvoord Ryrie Ladd	Premillennial	Historic Churches &/or seven stages of church history	<u>Future Tribulation</u> judgments on apostate church and Antichrist, return of Christ	Future millennium, judgment, heaven

Adapted from H. Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, 17

Four Views on Revelation 6–18

Revelation 6–18 depicts which era?



O. Four Interpretive Principles to Understand Revelation

1. Follow the usual sense unless it's nonsense.

a) 144,000 witnesses of Israel (7:4)

b) 1000 years of saint's reign (20:4)

c) 1260 days of prophesying (11:3)

d) 3½ days of death (11:9)

e) Euphrates dries up (16:12)

f) Weights (16:21) and lengths (21:16)

g) The number 7 points to completeness but also should be taken at face value.

(1) The number 7 in the rest of the Bible (representative examples):



(a) Creation (Gen. 2:2)

(b) Rain (Gen. 7:4)

(c) Sabbath (Exod. 20:10)

(d) Jericho (Josh. 6:4)

(e) Sons (Job 1:2; Ruth 4:15)

(f) Prophecy (Dan. 9:24)

(g) Forgive (Matt. 18:21)



(2) The number 7 appears 55 times in Revelation (some examples):

- (a) Churches 1:4a
- (b) Spirits 1:4b
- (c) Lampstands 1:12
- (d) Stars 1:16
- (e) Seals 5:1
- (f) Eyes 5:6
- (g) Angels 8:2
- (h) Trumpets 8:2
- (i) Peals 10:3
- (j) 7000 killed 11:13
- (k) Heads 12:3a
- (l) Diadems 12:3b
- (m) Plagues 15:1
- (n) Bowls 15:7
- (o) Mountains 17:9
- (p) Kings 17:10

“It is worth noting that there are seven “beatitudes” in Revelation: [1:3](#); [14:13](#); [16:15](#); [19:9](#); [20:6](#); [22:7](#), [14](#).¹”

- h) Revelation 11:1-12 is a “Test Case in Hermeneutics” that shows the reasonableness of taking the text in its normal sense. See the comparative study of three different views on the next two pages.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Revelation*, The Bible Exposition Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1996, c1989), 5 (online edition).

Three Views on Revelation 11:1-3

Based on a handout presented by Robert L. Thomas at the Evangelical Theological Society meetings in Boston, November 1999

Evangelicals see the witnesses of Revelation 11 in very different ways. The following quotes and page numbers come from Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1999); ETS paper by Grant Osborne, 1999 (author of *The Hermeneutical Spiral*); and Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody, 1992, 1995).

Revelation 11:1-3 (NIV)

¹I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. ²But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. ³And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

Term or Expression	Beale <i>Symbolic</i>	Osborne <i>Symbolic-Literal</i>	Thomas <i>Literal</i>
1 "measure" (11:1)	"the infallible promise of God's future presence"; "the protection of God's eschatological community" (559); "until the parousia" (566)	"preservation of the saints spiritually in the coming great persecution" (5; cf. 7); "a prophetic anticipation of the final victory of the church" (8)	"a mark of God's favor" (80-81)
2 "the temple (<i>naon</i>)" (11:1)	"the temple of the church" (561); "Christians" (562); "the whole covenant community" (562); "the community of believers undergoing persecution yet protected by God" (566)	The heavenly temple depicting "the church, primarily the saints of this final period but secondarily the church of all ages" (6; cf. 7 n. 4)	"a future temple in Jerusalem during the period just before Christ returns" (81-82)
3 "the altar" (11:1)	"the suffering covenant community" (563)	the [heavenly] altar of incense" (6)	"the brazen altar of sacrifice in the court outside the sanctuary" (82)
4 "the worshipers" (11:1)	"believers worshipping together in the temple community" (564)	"individual believers" (7)	"a future godly remnant in Israel" (82)
5 "in it" (11:1)	in the temple or the altar (571)	"in the church" or "at the altar" (7)	"in the rebuilt temple" (82)
6 "the court... outside the temple (<i>naon</i>)" (11:2)	"God's true people," including Gentiles (560)	"the saints who are persecuted" (8)	"the wicked without God" (83)
7 "given to" (11:2)	"not protected from various forms of earthly harm (physical, economic, social, etc.)" (569)	not protected from Gentiles/nations (8); God delivers his followers into the hands of sinners (9)	"exclusion from God's favor" (83)
8 "the Gentiles" (11:2)	"the Gentiles and Jews" (569)	"the church handed over to the Gentiles/nations for a time" (9)	"a group [of non-Jews] in rebellion against God who will oppress the Jewish remnant" (83-84)
9 "they will trample on" (11:2)	persecution of the church from Christ's resurrection until his first coming (567)	"the saints will suffer incredibly" in a physical sense (10)	"future defilement and domination of Jerusalem" (86)
10 "the holy city" (11:2)	"the initial form of the heavenly city, part of which is identified with believers living on earth" (568)	"the people of God" (9)	"the literal city of Jerusalem on earth" (84)
11 "forty-two months" (11:2)	"figurative for the eschatological period of tribulation" (565); "attack on the community of faith throughout the church age" (566)	"the 'great tribulation' at the end of history" (1, 12)	"the last half of Daniel's seventieth week" (85)
12 "the two witnesses" (11:3)	the church; "the whole community of faith" (573)	"two major eschatological figures... as a symbol for the witnessing church" (14, 16)	two future prophets, probably Moses and Elijah (87-89)
13 "the great city" (11:8)	"Babylon" = "Rome" = "the ungodly world" (591-592)	Jerusalem and Rome' secondarily, all cities that oppose God (27)	Jerusalem (93-94)
14 the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses (11:11-12)	"divine legitimization of a prophetic call" (599)	"A proleptic anticipation of the 'rapture' of the church" (35)	the resurrection of the two witnesses (97)

Summaries (this strings the above descriptions into interpretive sentences of 11:1-3, 8, 11-12)

Beale (Symbolic)

¹I was given a reed symbolizing the infallible promise of God's future presence and was told, "Go and protect God's eschatological community (which is the temple of the church) until the parousia and protect the suffering covenant community and count the believers worshiping together in the temple community. ²But exclude God's true people, including Gentiles; do not protect this suffering covenant community of Gentiles and Jews because they are not protected from various forms of earthly harm (physical, economic, social, etc.). They will attack and persecute the whole community of faith throughout the church age which is the initial form of the heavenly city, part of which is identified with believers living on earth for the eschatological period of tribulation. ³And I will give power to the church, and this whole community of faith will prophesy for the eschatological period of tribulation... [but after being killed] ⁸their bodies will lie in the street of Babylon or Rome which means the ungodly world [then they will receive] ¹¹⁻¹²divine legitimization of a prophetic call.

Osborne (Symbolic-Literal)

¹I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and preserve the saints spiritually in the coming great persecution (but secondarily the church of all ages) in anticipation of their final victory and measure (preserve?) the [heavenly] altar of incense, and count the individual believers in the church or at the altar. ²But exclude the saints who are persecuted... because they have not been protected from Gentiles/nations as God delivers his followers into the hands of sinners for a time. The saints will suffer incredibly in a physical sense in the people of God for the 'great tribulation' at the end of history. ³And I will give power to my witnessing church, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth... [but after being killed] ⁸their bodies will lie in the street of Jerusalem and Rome which secondarily refer to all cities that oppose God [then they will receive] ¹¹⁻¹²a proleptic anticipation of the 'rapture' of the church.

Thomas (Literal)

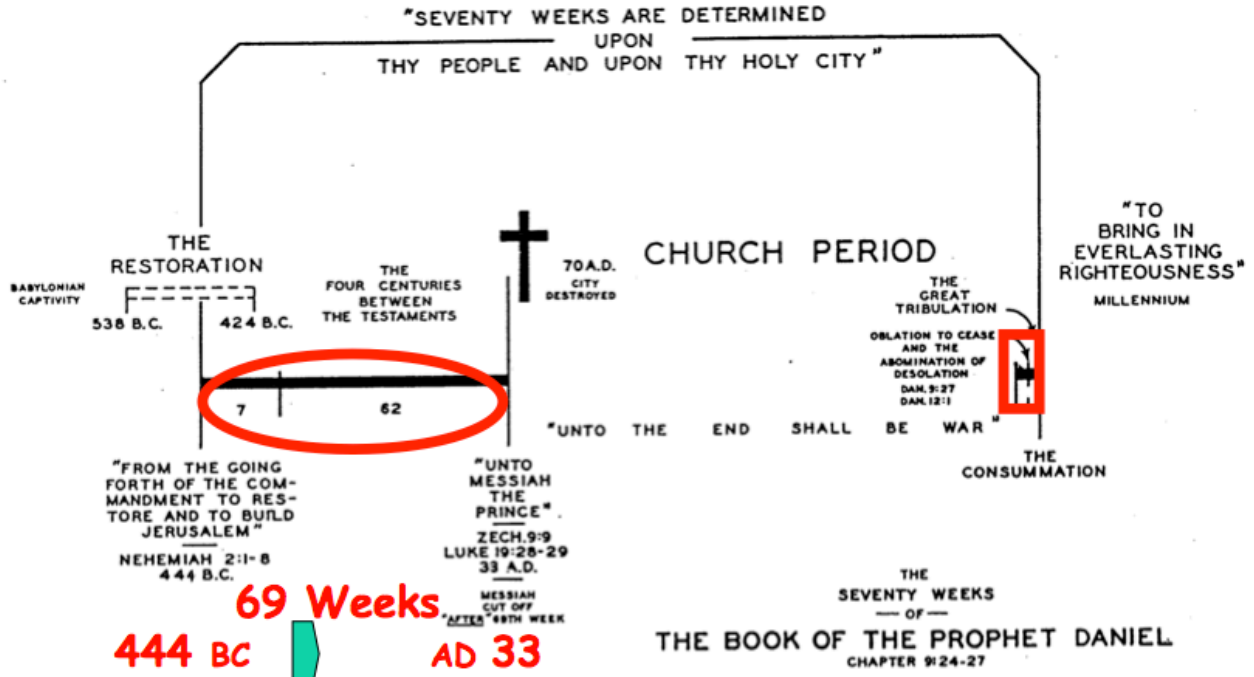
¹I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure as a mark of God's favor the future temple in Jerusalem during the period just before Christ returns and the brazen altar of sacrifice in the court outside the sanctuary, and count the future godly remnant in Israel in the rebuilt temple. ²But do not measure as a mark of God's favor the wicked without God... because they have been excluded from God's favor [and are] a group [of non-Jews] in rebellion against God who will oppress the Jewish remnant. They will trample on Jerusalem for the last half of Daniel's seventieth week. ³And I will give power to my two future prophets (probably Moses and Elijah), and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth... [but after being killed] ⁸their bodies will lie in the street of Jerusalem [then three and a half days later will] ¹¹⁻¹²be resurrected.

Continuing point "O" on Four Interpretive Principles to Understand Revelation...

2. Be consistent with Daniel's parallel prophecy.
 - a) Ten-horned Beast (Dan. 7:7-8): This denotes a world ruler aligned with Rome that John saw as still future (Rev 17:3, 10-11).
 - b) 7-year covenant (Dan. 9:27): Daniel's teaching that halfway through this period a world ruler will desecrate the temple (cf. Rev 13:14). Jesus also saw this as future from his time (Matt. 24:15).
 - c) 1290-day trial (Dan. 12:11): This correlates closely with the 1260-day trial of John's vision (Rev 11:3; 12:6).

Outline of Daniel											
UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGNTY IN TIMES OF THE GENTILES											
Sovereignty over Daniel			Sovereignty over Gentiles						Sovereignty over Jews		
Chapter 1			Chapters 2–7						Chapters 8–12		
Narrative			Visions in Narrative						Vision		
Hebrew			Aramaic						Hebrew		
Gentile Names for God			Gentile Names for God						Jewish Names for God		
Third person ("Daniel")			Third person ("Daniel")						First person ("I")		
Daniel's Example			Daniel Interprets King's Dreams						Angel Interprets Daniel's Dreams		
The Man Daniel			Images			Kings			Israel's Future		
Exile	Food	Exalted	Varied	Gold	Neb.	Bel.	Dar.	All	Medo-Persia To Greece	Return to Seventy "7s"	Intertest-ament Period to Tribulation
1:1-7	1:8-16	1:17-21	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10-12
			Promoted	Furnace	Exile	Party	Lions	Beasts			
Babylon											
605-536 BC											

Daniel's 70 Weeks (Dan. 9:24-27)



Dating Daniel's Seventy Weeks

<p>March 5, 444 B.C. Nisan 1 of Artaxerxes' 20th Year Nehemiah 2:1-8</p>	<p>March 30, A.D. 33 Triumphal Entry on Nisan 10 A.D. 33 Luke 19:28-40</p>				
69 WEEKS	* CHURCH AGE				
$69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880 \text{ days}$ March 5, 444 B.C. + 173,880 days = March 30, A.D. 33	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">70th WEEK</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">1/2 Week</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">1/2 Week</td> </tr> </table>	70th WEEK		1/2 Week	1/2 Week
70th WEEK					
1/2 Week	1/2 Week				

Verification

444 B.C. to A.D. 33 = 476 years

476 years \times 365.24219879 days = 173,855 days
 + days between March 5 & March 30 = 25 days
 173,880 days

*Messiah cut off after 69 weeks—April 3, A.D. 33.

Rationale for 360-Day Years

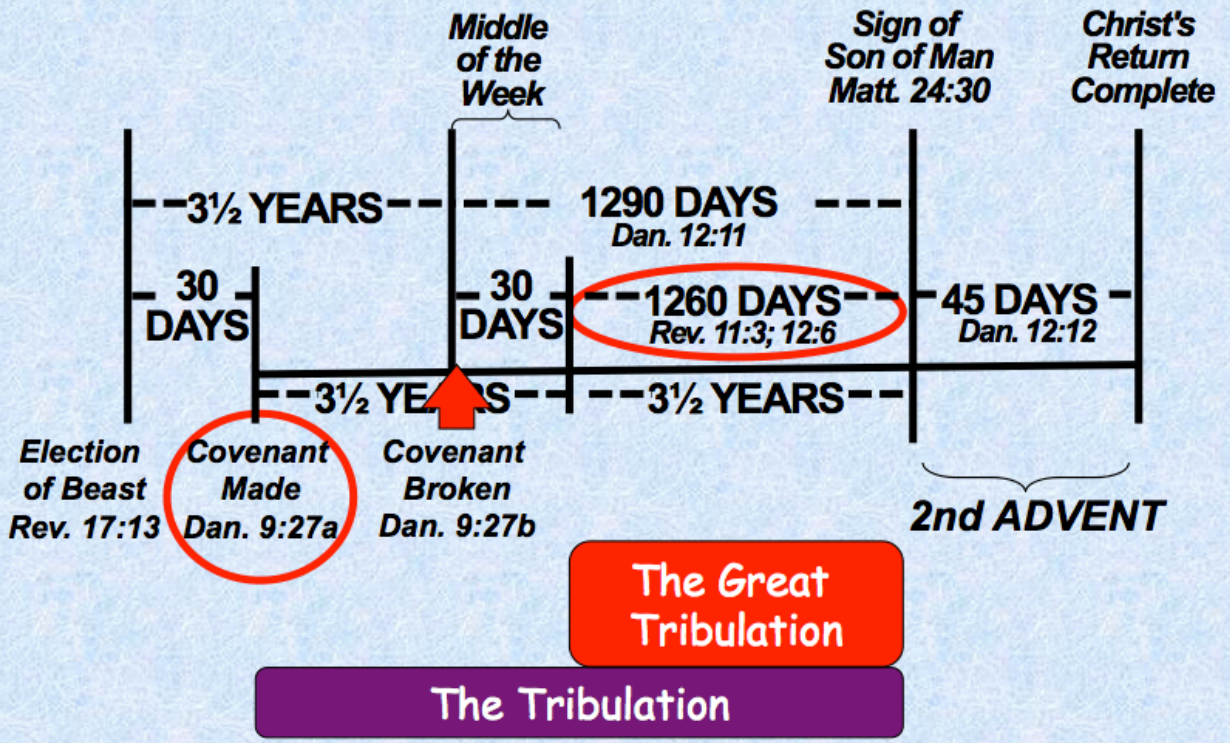
1/2 week—Dan. 9:27
 Time, times, 1/2 time—Dan. 7:25, 12:7;
 Rev. 12:14

1,260 days—Rev. 12:6, 11:3
 42 months—Rev. 11:2, 13:5
 Thus: 42 months = 1,260 days = time,
 times, 1/2 time = 1/2 week
 Therefore: month = 30 days; year = 360 days

Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 139

Chronology of the 70th "Week"

Adapted from J. Dwight Pentecost, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1988



Continuing point “O” on Four Interpretive Principles to Understand Revelation...

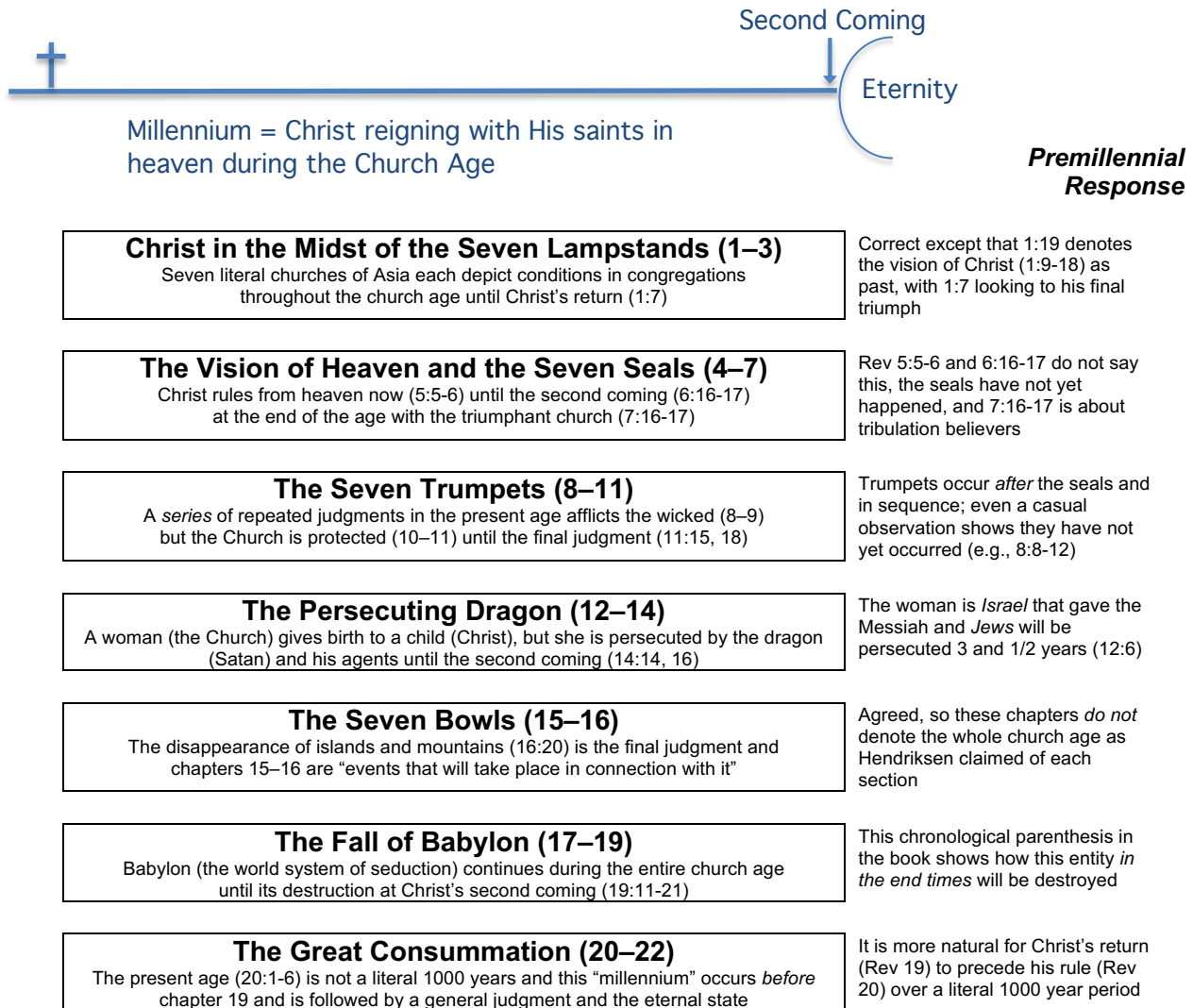
3. Assume a chronological order.
 - a) The normal way to read a book is to assume, unless otherwise indicated, that the story proceeds from point A to point B in time. There is no reason not to follow this normally accepted practice when reading the Revelation to John.

 - b) However, ***the recapitulation approach*** has recently gained some following where the book is seen as depicting the present church age seven different times.
 - (1) According to this view, chapters 1–3 cover the same time period as chapters 4–7 as both supposedly cover the time period between Christ’s first and second comings.
 - (2) Five more sections follow to depict the same church period.
 - (3) This view is diagrammed on the next page.

A Recapitulation Approach to Revelation

William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, 16-19

One common view of the book of Revelation by amillennial scholars sees it as presenting our present age seven times in parallel sections. Hendriksen is typical of this view, which spiritualizes the 1000 years of Revelation 20:1-6 and applies this period to our own Church Age. (Other commentators who see it this way are Lenski, Warfield, Sadlet, and S. L. Morris; cf. John Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*). In chart form the view would look like this:



c) Problems with the Recapitulation View

- (1) See rebuttals to the right of the Recapitulation diagram above.
- (2) Does Christ’s return appear repeatedly in the book? Even if it does (e.g., 1:7), these verses all look forward to Christ’s ultimate return in chapter 19. This does not deny a basic chronological structure in the prophecy.

Beale defends the view this way: "The strongest argument for the recapitulation view is the observation of *repeated combined scenes of consummative judgment and salvation* found in various sections throughout the book."²

(3) Evaluating a supposed example of recapitulation in 6:12-14:

- (a) The Text: The sixth seal is very early in the cycles of judgment yet states amazingly, “I watched as the Lamb broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became as dark as black cloth, and the moon became as red as blood. ¹³ Then the stars of the sky fell to the earth like green figs falling from a tree shaken by a strong wind.

² G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, GIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 121, emphasis mine.

The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up (6:14 NAU)

¹⁴The sky was rolled up like a scroll, and all of the mountains and islands were moved from their places” (6:12-14 NLT).

- (b) Recapitulation Claim: Beale, 398, notes that 6:12-14 has two descriptions of the sixth seal that correspond to the seventh bowl at the end of the tribulation in 16:17-21:
- (i) The great earthquake (6:12a) also happens in 16:18 (probably also in 11:13).
- (ii) Islands and mountains being removed (6:14b) also occur in 16:20. How could this happen twice?
- (c) Responses: Similar events do not necessarily indicate that the events are one and the same.
- (i) Earthquake: This is a huge earthquake never seen on the earth up to that point (6:12a), but this need not indicate Christ’s return. The earthquake of 16:18 is deemed greater since “no earthquake like it has ever happened since man was on earth...”
- (ii) Stars: Must 6:13 be the end of the world? It may *sound* like it, if the verses refer to *all* the stars and to the *entire* sky. But the text must not be forced to read *all* of the stars. “The phenomenon is so large that it appears from man’s perspective that the stars are falling, when in reality it is probably a very large meteor shower that invades the terrestrial atmosphere (Hailey)” (Thomas, 1:454).
- (iii) Sky: God will peel back the sky like a scroll, but this will not signal the end of the world. He has done this at times in the past as well (e.g., Acts 7:55-56 at the left), but “the old heaven” or sky will not be replaced until later when God creates “a new heaven” (21:1). The sky still exists even in 16:21 since it emits hail.
- (iv) Islands and mountains disappear, but not entirely. That the sixth seal earthquake is not literal but exaggerated is supported by the following verses that show men calling on the mountains to fall on them (6:16).³ Obviously, some mountains still exist in chapter 6. In contrast, following the larger earthquake of 16:18, “every island fled away, and the mountains could not be found.” The seventh bowl in Revelation 16:17 is the last chronological event prior to the return of Christ since Rev 17–18 are parenthetical.

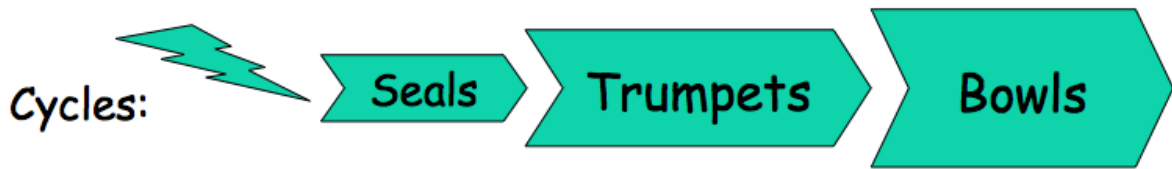
But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. ⁵⁶And he told them, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand!” (Acts 7:55-56 NIV)

³ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 455.

Continuing point "c" on Problems with the Recapitulation View...

(4) Judgments increasingly progress and intensify throughout Revelation.

(a) Seal judgments are not as severe as trumpet judgments, which in turn fail in intensity to the bowl judgments at the return of Christ.

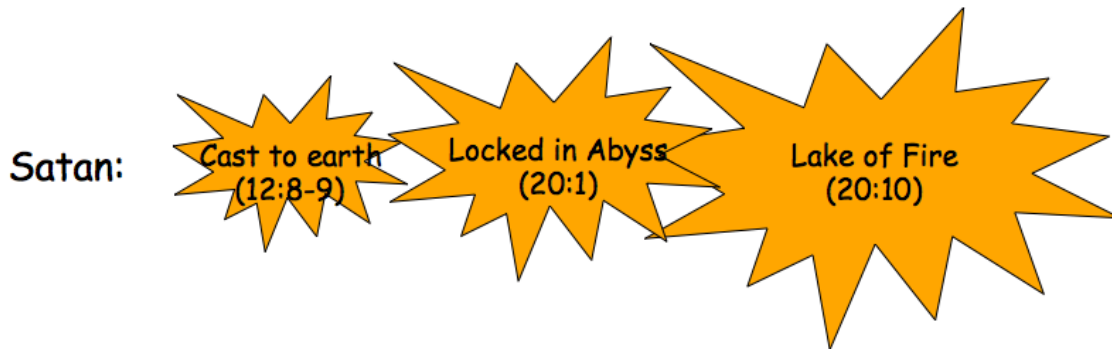


Content of the Judgments

	SEALS	TRUMPETS	BOWLS
1	White: conqueror	Hail & fire: 1/3 vegetation	Sores
2	Red: war	Fire: 1/3 sea creatures	Sea to blood
3	Black: famine	Star: 1/3 fresh water	Fresh water to blood
4	Pale: death	Dark: 1/3 sun, moon, stars	Sun burns men
		(Trumpets 5-7 are woes)	
5	Martyrs reassured	Woe #1: locusts	Beast's kingdom dark
6	Wrath: earthquake, signs	Woe #2: Euphrates prep	Euphrates dries up
	(144,000 sealed)	(Trump #7 = mystery)	
7	1/2 hour silence	Woe #3: victory imminent	Earthquake & hail

Adapted from Robert Gromacki, *NT Survey* and H. Wayne House, *Chronological & Background Charts of the NT*, 19

- (b) Satan's judgment is also progressive, from being expelled from heaven (2:8-9) to being locked in the Abyss for 1000 years (20:1) to finally being thrown into the lake of fire (20:10).



Continuing point "O" on Four Interpretive Principles to Understand Revelation...

4. Use Revelation's inspired outline in 1:19.

- a) Some deny this to be a chronological marker, such as Beale, 216:

"Among the numerous interpretations of this notoriously difficult threefold clause, the following six appear to be most plausible:

(1) John is to write down the entire vision (v 19a), in particular that of chs. 1–3 (v 19b) and those of chs. 4ff., which follow historically after those of chs. 1–3 (v 19c).

(2) John is to write down the vision in 1:12–18 (v 19a), as well as that of chs. 2–3 (v 19b), and those visions of chs. 4ff. that come in order after those of chs. 1–3 (v 19c).

(3) John is to write down the entire vision that he saw (v 19a), which concerns realities pertaining to the present (v 19b) and the future (v 19c).

(4) In line with the threefold clauses of 1:4 and 1:8, the threefold clause of v 19 expresses not only eternal duration, but a revelation which transcends historical time and uncovers the meaning of existence and of history in its totality.

(5) John is to write down the entire vision that he saw (v 19a) pertaining to present realities (v 19b), which are to be understood as the beginning of the latter days, and which will be concluded by the end of history (v 19c).

(6) John is commanded to write a book containing a threefold literary genre, which is visionary-apocalyptic (v 19a), figurative (v 19b, rendered as "what they mean"), and eschatological (v 19c, viewed in an already-and-not-yet sense). Among these six alternatives, the last three are preferable.

The least plausible view is that which understands the verse as a sequential chronological outline of the entire book, v 19a as pertaining only to the time of the vision in 1:12–18, v 19b pertaining only to the church age described in chs. 2–3, and v 19c pertaining only to the future tribulation period directly preceding and including Christ's final coming (portrayed in chs. 4–21).

The meaning of v 19 is crucial since it is usually understood to be paradigmatic for the structure and the content of the whole book. For thorough discussion of the exegesis, alternative views, and interpretative problems of this verse see further pp. 152–70 above."

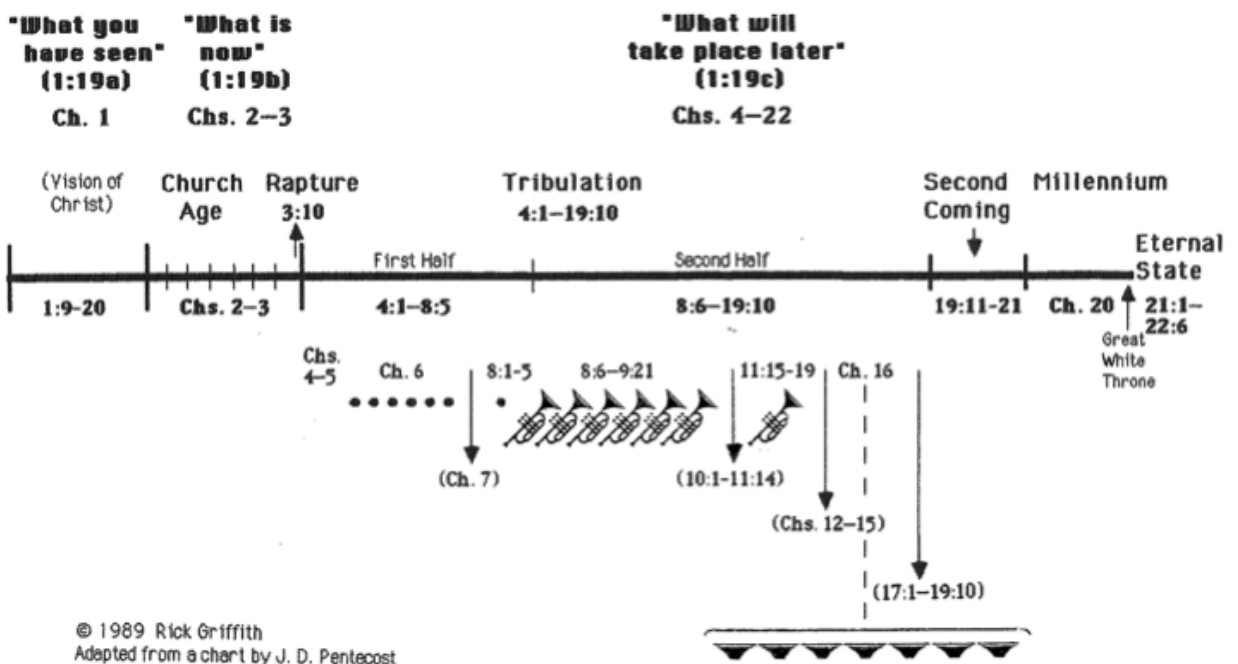
- b) Beale continues to argue that affinities between Daniel 2 and Revelation 1 argue that the two relate to the present age.
- c) What can be said in response to this claim that Revelation 4–22 does not refer to the future but to the present?
- (1) One wonders if Beale himself considers all of Revelation 4–22 as signifying the present age. Certainly he would agree that the final two chapters relate to eternity, so he is inconsistent by claiming that this large section refers both to the present (Rev 4–20) and the future (Rev 21–22).
 - (2) The inconsistencies of the recapitulation view have already been discussed.
 - (3) The seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments contain such incredible descriptions that they cannot be true of the present age without spiritualizing them.
 - (a) When in the present age have we seen one fourth of the world die by sword, famine or plague (6:8)?
 - (b) When has an army of 200,000,000 crossed the Euphrates River for battle (9:16; 16:12-14)?
 - (c) When has man witnessed 75-pound hail (16:21)?
 - (d) Many other examples can be cited.

Argument

The Gospel writers give only a limited picture of Jesus Christ as they depict his deity, life, authority, death, and resurrection almost entirely in veiled form (cf. Phil. 2:5-8). The book of Revelation removes this veil and clearly shows Christ's sovereignty in his future final triumph as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (17:14; 19:16). John records this triumph to encourage believers undergoing external opposition (Roman persecution) and internal compromise (deterioration within the churches) to give them hope.

As already mentioned, Revelation 1:19 provides an inspired outline of the entire prophecy. This begins with John's past vision of Christ's sovereignty (1:9-20), continues with a present description of Christ's sovereign authority over the seven churches (Rev 2-3), and concentrates the bulk of the prophecy upon the future triumph of Christ over Satan and evil (Rev 4-22).

Chronology of Revelation



Synthesis

Sovereignty of Christ in future victory

1	Sovereign over death
1:1-3	Subject
1:4-8	Worship of Trinity
1:9-20	Glorified Christ

2-3	Sovereign over churches			
2:1-7	Ephesus	(Busy	yet	Backslidden)
2:8-11	Smyrna	(Suffering	yet	Steadfast)
2:12-17	Pergamum	(Continuing	yet	Compromising)
2:18-29	Thyatira	(Involved	yet	Immoral)
3:1-6	Sardis	(Distinguished	yet	Dead)
3:7-13	Philadelphia	(Mistreated	yet	Missions-Minded)
3:14-22	Laodicea	(Luxurious	yet	Lukewarm)

4-22	Sovereign over end-time events		
4:1-19:10	Tribulation		
4:1-8:5	First half		
4-5	Christ's heavenly position		
4	Throne		
5	Scroll		
6:1-8:5	Seals		
6	#1-6		
7	(Saved Jews/Gentiles)	() = Parenthetical information where
8:1-5	#7		the chronology is not carried forward
8:6-19:10	Second half		
8:6-11:19	Trumpets		
8:6-9:21	#1-6		
10:1-11:14	(Saved protected/unsaved judged, 2 witnesses)		
11:15-19	#7		
12-14	(Satan's activity, etc.)		
12-13	Satan/agents		
14	144,000 triumph		
15-16	Bowls #1-7		
17:1-19:10	(Babylon's destruction)		
19:11-21	Second Coming		
20	Millennium, Satan's Doom, Great White Throne		
21:1-22:5	Eternal State		
22:6-21	Conclusion: coming imminent		

A Chiasmic View of Revelation

One often-used literary arrangement in the Bible where subjects reappear in “mirror order” is known as a *chiasm*, named after the Greek letter *chi* (c), which looks like the English letter “x.” Vern Poythress, in *The Return of the King*, provides this type of outline for Revelation below.

- A. Leading into the visions: the seer, the revealers, and the audience 1:1-11
 - 1. Prologue 1:1-3
 - a. Title 1:1a.
 - b. The witness 1:1b-2
 - c. Reading the prophecy 1:3
 - 2. Participants 1:4-11
- B. Christophany 1:12-20
- C. Recompense to the churches: church militant 2:1-3:22
- D. Throne vision 4:1-5:14
 - E. 7 seals: rider judgments (1-4 focus on humans) 6:1-8:1
 - 1. Content of the judgments 6:1-17
 - 2. Preservation of the church 7:1-8:1
 - F. 7 trumpets: angelic judgments (1-4 focus on nature) 8:2-11:19
 - 1. Judgment of the nations 8:2-9:21
 - 2. Preservation of the church 10:1-11:13
 - 3. Joy in heaven 11:15-19
 - G. The redeemed 12:1-6
 - (with intermixed strife 12:3-6)
 - H. Deceptive opponent (Satan) 12:7-17
 - I. Destructive opponent (Beast) 13:1-10
 - H. Deceptive opponent (False Prophet) 13:11-18
 - G. The redeemed 14:1-20
 - (with intermixed strife 14:6-20)
 - F. 7 bowls: angelic judgments (1-4 focus on nature) 15:1-19:10
 - 1. Judgment of the nations 15:1-16:21
 - 2. End of the pseudochurch Babylon 17:1-18:24
 - 3. Joy in heaven 19:1-10
 - E. White horse: rider judgment (focus on humans) 19:11-20:10
 - 1. Content of judgment 19:11-21
 - 2. Preservation of the church 20:1-10
- D. Throne vision 20:11-15
- C. Announcement of recompense to the churches: church triumphant 21:1-8
- B. Theophany 21:9-22:5
- A. Leading out of the visions: the seer, the revealers, and the audience 22:6-21
 - 2. Participants 22:6-17
 - 1. Epilogue 22:18-21
 - c. Reading the prophecy 22:18-19
 - b. The witness 22:20
 - a. Colophon 22:21

The effect of this type of arrangement is to draw the reader's attention to the middle of the structure, which, in this case, is the Beast. One must ask, though, if the Beast is to be the center of attention in Revelation!

Outline

Summary Statement for the Book

The way to triumph over *internal compromise and external opposition* is to trust the *sovereignty of Jesus Christ* in his ultimate future victory.

I. The way to triumph over internal compromise and external opposition is to trust the sovereignty of Jesus Christ over death (Rev 1).

- A. John's prologue shows that the divinely given prophecy unveils Jesus Christ's sovereignty and promises a blessing on those who obey it (1:1-3).
 - 1. Christ's sovereignty in future events to rapidly take place transmits from the Father to Jesus to an angel to John to other believers to establish the prophecy's inspiration (1:1-2).
 - 2. People who read, hear, and obey this prophecy are promised a special blessing from God since from his perspective these events are near (1:3).

- B. John addresses seven churches in Asia and worships the triune God, especially Christ as the soon-to-come sovereign Ruler, to exhort his readers to watch for his return (1:4-8).
 - 1. The seven churches in Asia should worship Christ as world Ruler and Redemptive Resurrected Revealer of the prophecy to show his sovereignty over them (1:4-6).

 - 2. Christ's second coming in fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10 is the main feature of the prophecy and as an exhortation to look for his coming (1:7).

 - 3. God the Father is Lord of time and thus able to bring all the promises of the prophecy to pass (1:8).

- C. The glorified Jesus Christ shows his ability to handle the Church's internal and external problems and reveals the threefold outline of the book (1:9-20).
1. Christ commands the exiled John on Patmos to prophesy to the seven churches of Asia to reveal Christ's sovereignty (1:9-11).
 2. The vision of the glorified Jesus Christ proves he can handle the Church's internal and external problems (1:12-16).



3. John is comforted, instructed to record the prophecy's outline, and shown Christ's authority over the seven churches as an introduction to the letters to these churches (1:17-20).
 - a) John is terrified at the presence of the glorified Christ but Jesus comforts him with his divine attributes (1:17-18).
 - b) The threefold outline of his prophecy includes Jesus (1:9-20), his authority over the churches (Rev 2–3), and the future (Rev 4–22) relating to Christ's return (1:19).
 - c) Christ has authority over the churches (stars) and their witness for Christ (lampstands) in a spiritually dark world (1:20).

Map of the Seven Churches

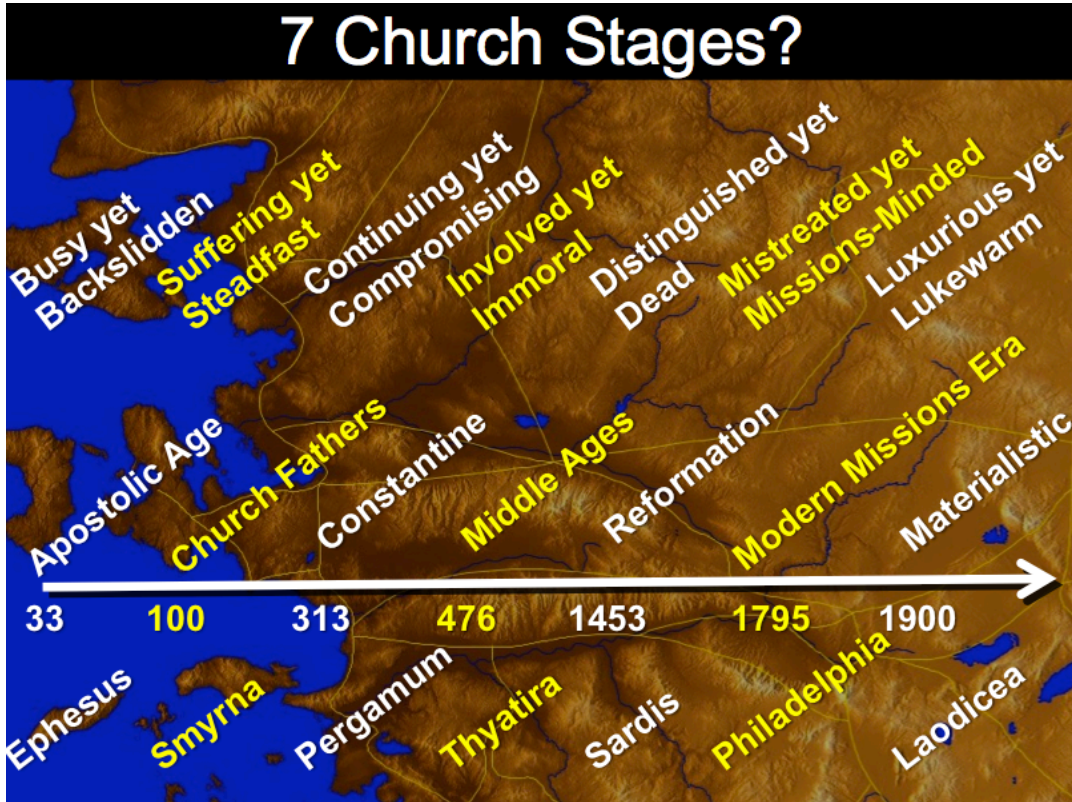


Chart of the Letters to the Seven Churches

Church	Christ	Commendation	Rebuke	Exhortation	Warning	Promise
Ephesus (2:1-7) <i>Busy Yet Backsliding</i>	He holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.	I know your works and steadfast to endure for my name and not tolerate evil; you test self-named apostles; persist steadfastly and do not grow weary.	You have departed from your first love.	Remember the high state from which you have fallen and repent! Do the deeds you did at first.	If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.	To the one who conquers, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.
Smyrna (2:8-11) <i>Suffering Yet Steadfast</i>	He is the first and the last, the one who was dead, but came to life.	I know your distress and poverty (but you are rich) and the slander against you by self-called Jews that really are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.	(Absent)	Do not fear what you are about to suffer.	The devil will throw some of you into prison as a test and you will suffer for ten days.	Remain faithful unto death for the crown that is life itself. The one who conquers will not be harmed by the second death.
Pergamum (2:12-17) <i>Continuing Yet Compromising</i>	He has the sharp double-edged sword.	You live where Satan's throne is. Yet you cling to my name and have not denied me, even when Antipas was killed in your city.	Some follow Balaam's idolatry and the Nicolaitan immorality.	Repent!	If you do not repent, I will make war against those people with the sword of my mouth.	You will get some hidden manna, and a white stone with a new name that no one else knows.
Thyatira (2:18-29) <i>Involved Yet Immoral</i>	He has eyes like a fiery flame and feet like polished bronze.	I know your deeds: your love, faith, service, and steadfast endurance and that your recent deeds are greater.	You tolerate Jezebel's false prophecies, food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality.	Her adulterers will have terrible suffering and a deadly disease so all churches will know his omniscience and right to judge.	Those avoiding "satanic secrets" must hold what you have until I come.	The conqueror who continues in my deeds will get authority over the nations and the morning star.
Sardis (3:1-6) <i>Distinguished Yet Dead</i>	He holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.	I know your deeds.	You have a reputation that you are alive, but in reality you are dead.	Wake up and strengthen your incomplete deeds, obey and repent.	If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief against you.	You will dress in white with eternal security declared before my Father and his angels.
Philadelphia (3:7-13) <i>Mistreated Yet Missions-Minded</i>	He is the Holy One, the True One, who holds the key of David, who opens doors no one can shut, and shuts doors no one can open.	I know your deeds. Look! I have given you an open door that no one can shut. You have little strength, but have obeyed my word and kept my name.	(Absent)	Hold on to what you have so that no one can take away your crown.	(Absent)	Jews from Satan's synagogue will confess that I have loved you. I will keep you out of the Tribulation. I am coming soon... You will be praised in the new Jerusalem.
Laodicea (3:14-22) <i>Luxurious Yet Lukewarm</i>	He is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the originator of God's creation.	(Absent)	I know your lukewarm deeds and will vomit out of my mouth you who say, "I am rich and need nothing," but really are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.	Buy gold, white clothing and eye salve from me! All those I love, I rebuke and discipline so repent! Listen! I seek fellowship.	(Absent)	The one who conquers will sit with me on my throne, just as I too conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

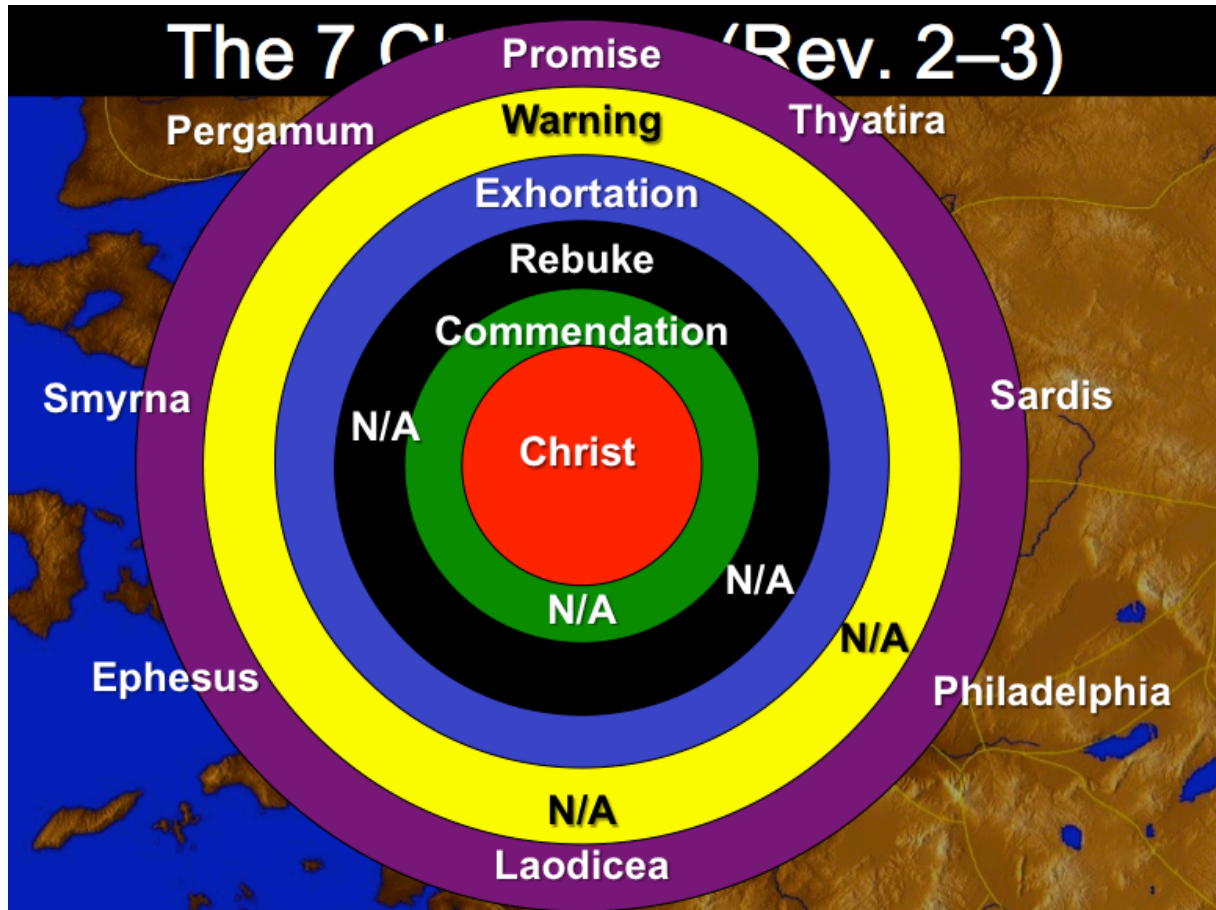
For a discussion of whether the seven churches reflect seven ages of church history, see Robert L. Thomas, "The Chronological Interpretation of Revelation 2-3," *BibSac* 124 (1967): 321-31; James L. Boyer, "Are the Seven Letters of Revelation 2-3 Prophetic?" *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 267-73. This view is quite rare among interpreters.

II. The way seven Asian churches can triumph over internal compromise and external opposition is to trust the sovereignty of Jesus Christ (Rev 2-3).



Eightfold Letters from Christ

Like a skillful archer who can hit the “bull’s eye” 100% of the time, Christ is “dead on” in his assessment of every church. His evaluation of the seven churches of Asia Minor appears in a repeated pattern and is depicted below as if on a target where Christ first describes himself, and then accurately depicts six more declarations about each congregation and an appeal from the Spirit.



Some exceptions exist (see “N/A” above), but the basic pattern of the seven letters is eightfold:

1. **Church** Name Attached to its Messenger
2. **Christ** Described in a Unique Way for that Church
3. **Commendation** of Good Deeds among the Believers
4. **Rebuke** of Sin within the Church
5. **Exhortation** or Encouragement to Repent
6. **Warning** if the Exhortation is Disobeyed
7. **Promise** for Faithfulness
8. **Spirit** Appeal to Obey

Each letter not only begins with a reference to Christ but ends with an appeal from the Spirit.

- A. Busy Yet Backsliding—Apostolic Age: Christ praises Ephesian believers for their service and diligence in God's truth and exhorts them to rekindle their love for Christ (2:1-7).
1. Destination: Ephesus (2:1a)



2. Description of Christ: He has a firm grasp on the seven stars in his right hand and he walks among the seven golden lamp stands (2:1b).
3. Commendation: I know your works and steadfastness for my name, and not tolerating evil, testing self-named apostles, persisting steadfastly and not growing weary (2:2-3).



4. Rebuke: You have departed from your first love (2:4).

5. Exhortation: Remember the high state from which you have fallen and repent! Do the deeds you did at first (2:5a).

6. Warning: If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place (2:5b-6).

7. Promise: To the one who conquers, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God (2:7).

B. Suffering Yet Steadfast: AD 100-313 when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire: Christ praises Smyrna for their suffering and exhorts courage (2:8-11).

1. Destination: Smyrna (2:8a)

2. Description of Christ: He is the one who is the first and the last, the one who was dead, but came to life (2:8b).



3. Commendation: I know your distress and poverty (but you are rich) and the slander against you by self-called Jews that really are not, but are a synagogue of Satan (2:9).

4. Rebuke (absent)

5. Exhortation: Do not fear what you are about to suffer (2:10a).

6. Warning: The devil will throw some of you into prison as a test and you will suffer for ten days (2:10b).



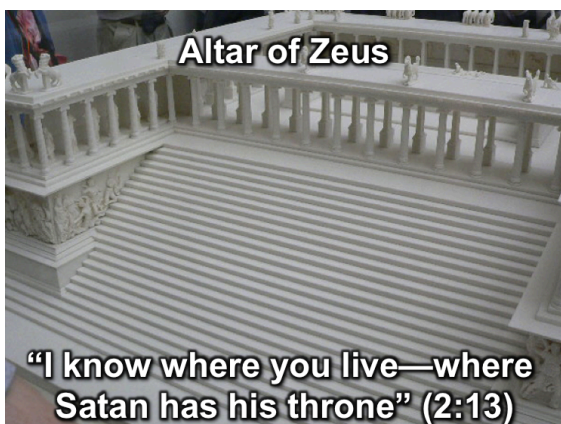
7. Promise: Remain faithful unto death for the crown that is life itself. The one who conquers will not be harmed by the second death (2:10c-11).

C. Continuing Yet Compromising—AD 313-Pre-Middle Ages: Christ praises Pergamum believers for their faithfulness despite satanic attack and exhorts them to reject heresy (2:12-17).

1. Destination: Pergamum (2:12a)

2. Description of Christ: He has the sharp double-edged sword (2:12b).

3. Commendation: You live where Satan's throne is. Yet you cling to my name and have not denied me, even when Antipas was killed in your city (2:13).



4. Rebuke: Some there follow Balaam, who instructed Israel to eat food sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality and some also follow the Nicolaitans (2:14-15).



5. Exhortation: Repent (2:16a)!

6. Warning: If you do not repent, I will make war against those people with the sword of my mouth (2:16b).

7. Promise: The conqueror will get some hidden manna, and a white stone with a new name that no one else knows (2:17).

D. Involved Yet Immoral—Middle Ages: Christ commends some Thyatira believers as properly motivated and persevering to exhort the others to repent of immorality (2:18-29).

1. Destination: Thyatira (2:18a)



Thyatira was famous for its purple dyes and guilds for tanners, dyers, woolen and linen workers. These led to an extensive use of clay pots and pagan celebrations. Many Christians died rather than compromise in guild festivities.

To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end,
To them I will give authority over all the nations.
²⁷They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots (2:26-27).

2. Description of Christ: He has eyes like a fiery flame and feet like polished bronze (2:18b).

3. Commendation: I know your deeds: your love, faith, service, and steadfast endurance and that your recent deeds are greater (2:19).

4. Rebuke: You tolerate Jezebel... who deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols and will not repent of her sexual immorality (2:20-21).

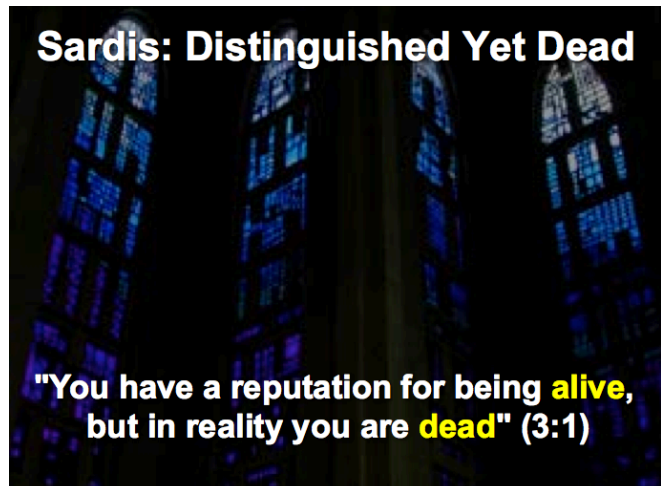
5. Warning: I am bringing her violent illness, and adulterers with her into terrible suffering, unless they repent... I will repay each one... (2:22-23).

6. Exhortation: To all who have not learned the so-called "deep secrets of Satan," I do not burden you further; however, hold what you have until I come (2:24-25).

7. Promise: The conqueror who continues in my deeds will get authority over the nations and the morning star (2:26-29).



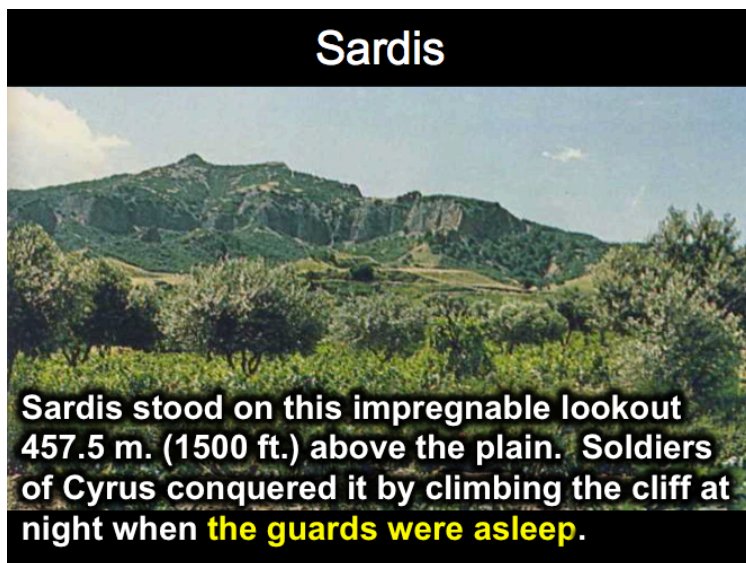
- E. Distinguished Yet Dead—Catholics in the Reformation-late 1700's: Christ commends Sardis believers for their good deeds to renew them to obey what they had been taught (3:1-6).
1. Destination: Sardis (3:1a)



2. Description of Christ: He holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars (3:1b).
3. Commendation: I know your deeds (3:1c).

4. Rebuke: You have a reputation that you are alive, but in reality you are dead (3:1d).

5. Exhortation: Wake up and strengthen your incomplete deeds, obey and repent (3:2-3a).



6. Warning: If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief against you (3:3b).

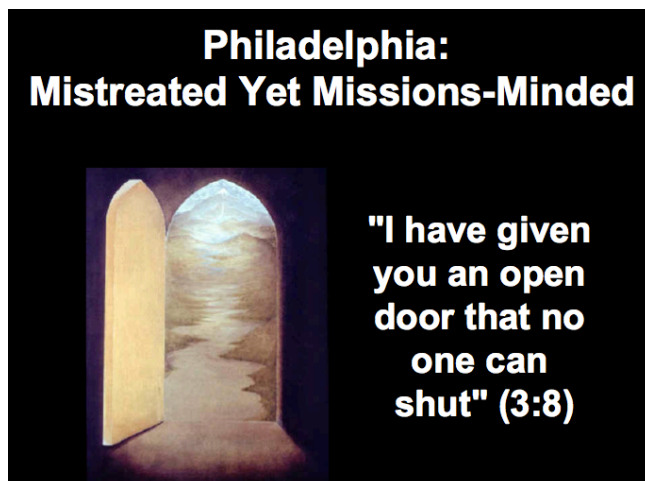
7. Promise: Those with clean clothes will walk with me in white and...I will never erase his name from the book of life, but will declare his name before my Father... (3:4-6).

F. Mistreated Yet Missions-Minded—Modern Missionary Era (1795-1900s]: Christ praises Philadelphia's evangelism despite opposition and urges perseverance (3:7-13).

1. Destination: Philadelphia (3:7a)

2. Description of Christ: He is the Holy One, the True One, who holds the key of David, who opens doors no one can shut, and shuts doors no one can open (3:7b).

3. Commendation: I know your deeds. Look! I have given you an open door that no one can shut. You have little strength, but have obeyed my word and kept my name (3:8).



4. Rebuke (absent)

5. Warning (absent)

6. Promise 1: Jews from Satan's synagogue [will]... acknowledge that I have loved you. I will keep you *out of* (not "through") the *hour* (time period) of the Tribulation (3:9-11a).

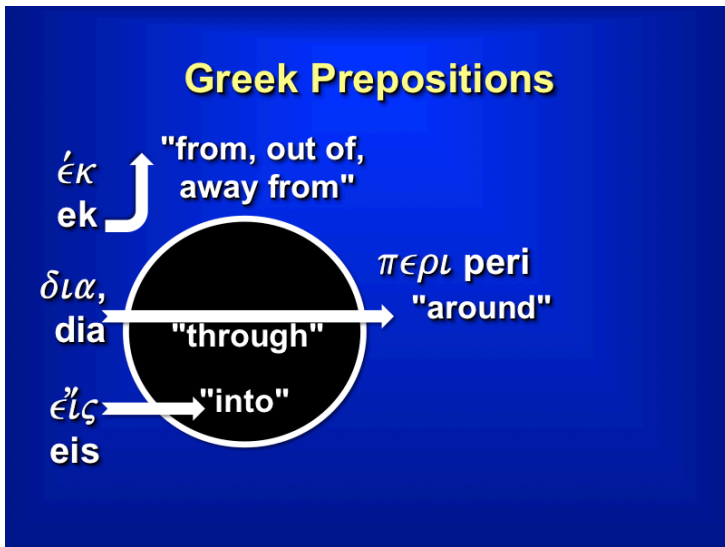
7. Exhortation: Hold on to what you have so that no one can take away your crown (3:11b).

8. Promise 2: The one who conquers I will make a pillar in the temple of my God and write on him God's name and city and my new name as well (3:12-13).

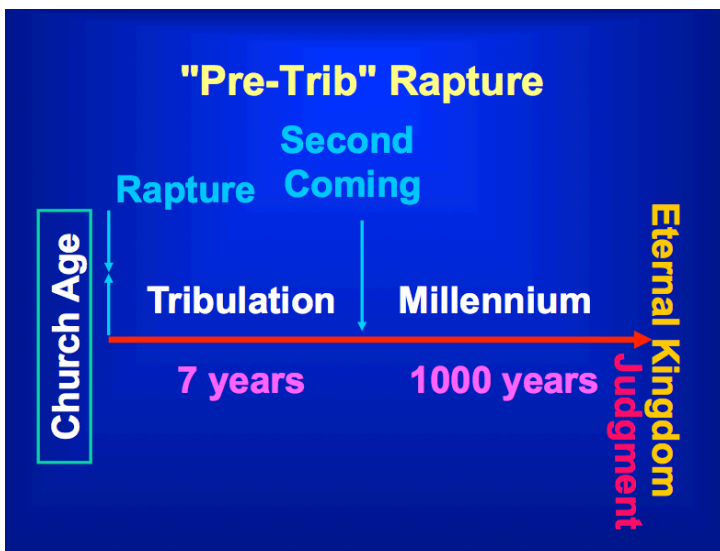


Kept from the Hour of Trial (Rev 3:10)

There are four key Greek prepositions used in relation to movement:



Of these four, which of them would you expect to indicate the believers and the Tribulation?



Not surprisingly, the one used is the preposition *ek*, meaning that Christians will be *kept from* that entire time of trial...

"Pre-Trib" Rapture

1. "I will keep you from (ἐκ) the hour of testing that will come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10)

But how is the phrase "keep from" used in other NT passages? There exists only one passage...

The Only Other NT Occurrence of "Keep From" (τηρέω ἐκ)

1. "I do not ask you to take them out of (ἐκ) the world, but to keep them from (ἐκ) the evil one" (John 17:15)

**Not kept in Satan's sphere parallels
not kept in Tribulation Period**

So John 17:15 refers to Christ not taking believers *out of* the world. This helps us see that the Greek phrase refers to being *taken out* or *kept from* something.

G. Luxurious Yet Lukewarm—Modern Materialistic Church: Christ criticizes Laodicean believers so they will repent of their materialistic selfishness and embrace Christ's Lordship (3:14-22).

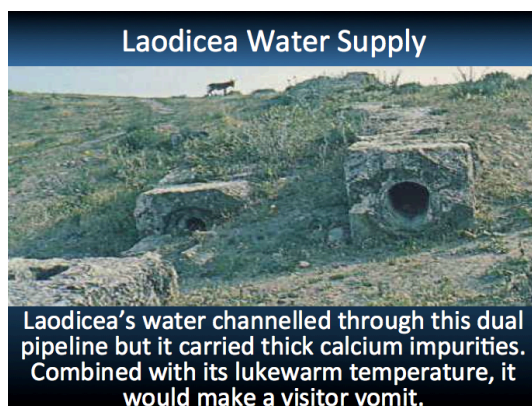
1. Destination: Laodicea (3:14a)



2. Description of Christ: He is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the originator of God's creation (3:14b).

3. Commendation (absent)

4. Rebuke: I know your lukewarm deeds and...I will vomit you out of my mouth! You say, "I am rich and need nothing," but... you are wretched... poor, blind, and naked (3:15-17).



5. Exhortation: Buy refined gold from me to become rich... All those I love, I rebuke and discipline so repent! Listen! I seek mutual fellowship (3:18-20).



6. Warning (absent)

7. Promise: The one who conquers will sit with me on my throne, just as I too conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne (3:21-22).

Who are the “Overcomers” in Revelation 2–3?

Revelation uses the word “overcomer” 8 times for believers—seven times (once for each church) in the letters to the churches and one final time in the new Jerusalem (21:7). Does this term indicate a *special category* of believers, or does it refer to *all* Christians? In each case Christ makes a promise to the person who overcomes (νικῶντι or νικῶν *nikon*, from which we get our English word “victor”):

Ephesus—Rev 2:7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.”

Smyrna—Rev 2:11 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.”

Pergamum—Rev 2:17 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.”

Thyatira—Rev 2:26 “He who overcomes, and he who keeps my deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.”

Sardis—Rev 3:5 “He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before his angels.”

Philadelphia—Rev 3:12 “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.”

Laodicea—Rev 3:21 “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on his throne.”

All Believers—Rev 21:7 “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.”

How can a Christian overcome this evil age? Follow Jesus Christ. He overcame death itself, so each of us “on his team” can also overcome the world and receive these promises! “... The Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has *overcome* so as to open the book and its seven seals” (5:5).

Several arguments point to overcomers being faithful believers:

1. All believers overcome in 1 John 5:4-5, yet some will still “shrink away in shame” (1 John 2:28). This is because “...whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness... because the darkness has blinded him” (1 John 2:11). Such is a reality only for Christians, as unbelievers do not have a spiritual “brother.”
2. “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (5:10). Yet the degree of ruling depends on faithfulness.
3. The point of the exhortations is to encourage perseverance among suffering or compromising saints. Each letter is written to Christians. If we all overcome, then why all the warnings and promises?
4. If all overcome, then none could lose their crown: “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown” (3:11).
5. “The seven letters deal with Christian works, not salvation (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15)” — Yates, *BibSac* (2006): 227
6. The context of Rev 21:6-8 presents three types of people: all saints (21:6), overcomers (21:7), and unbelievers (21:8).
7. Nothing prohibits Jesus from encouraging faithful believers with promises that would also apply to all Christians, such as no second death (2:11) or his name not erased from the book of life (3:5).
8. The Bible teaches two types of inheritance throughout. All believers will *enter* the kingdom to gain eternal life, yet only those who overcome the world will *inherit* the kingdom and reign with Christ (cf. Rom 8:17; Heb 3:14). See Joseph Dillow, *Final Destiny*, that supports eternal security but greater rewards for those who persevere.

The Chiasm (Rev. 2–3)



Continuing from the summary of chapters 2–3 on page 343...

III. The way to triumph over internal compromise and external opposition is to trust the sovereignty of Jesus Christ in his future end-time victory (Rev 4–22).

- A. Prophecies of the seven-year Tribulation emphasize the second half (the Great Tribulation) and show Christ's sovereignty as worthy to judge the world (4:1–19:10).
1. The first half of the Tribulation depicts Christ's sovereignty over Antichrist during this relatively peaceful period (4:1–8:5).
 - a) An introduction to the Tribulation judgments shows Christ's sovereign, heavenly position as the only one worthy to judge the world (Rev 4–5).
 - (1) The awesome heavenly throne points to the greatness of God (and therefore of Christ also) who dwells there due to his work of creation (Rev 4).

Who are the 24 elders?

- a) Many claim that these represent the church (with its 12 apostles) + Israel (with its 12 tribes).





- (b) A better view is to see this at face value as heavenly beings before God's throne.
- (i) Nothing in the text indicates that one should add $12 + 12$ to get 24. Why not multiply the Trinity by the perfect number ($3 \times 7 = 21$), and then add the Trinity to this for good measure to equal 24?
 - (ii) Even if we did add $12 + 12$, why not say that they represent the 12 OT tribal leaders and the 12 NT apostles? This does not seem plausible since it also goes beyond the clear teaching of the text.
 - (iii) The context puts the elders with four other heavenly creatures since, after all, this is a depiction of the heavenly court before the throne. This argues for them to be a class of angels also.
 - (iv) Redeemed humanity is noted in this vision as those from every tribe, nation, language and people (5:9; cf. 7:9), so it would be redundant to have the elders symbolize the church and Israel too. The elders refer to the church as "them" (5:10).
 - (v) An elder performs an explanatory purpose like angels (7:13-14).
 - (vi) Ironically, most scholars who claim that the 24 elders represent Israel here do *not* believe the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel (7:1) are actually Jews. Therefore, they find Jews where they are *not* mentioned (chap. 4) but deny the existence of Jews where they *are* explicitly mentioned!

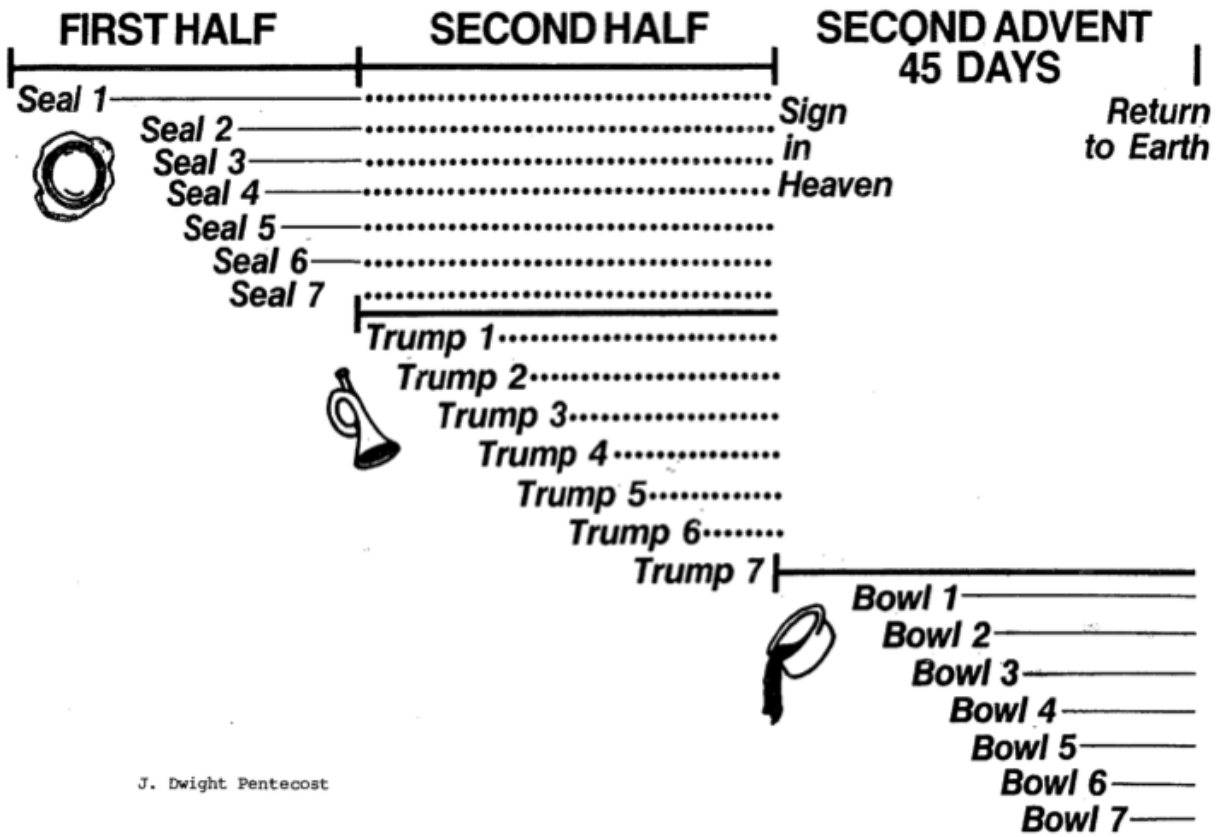
- (2) The Lamb (Jesus Christ) alone is sovereign to break the seals and judge the world due to his work of redemption (Rev 5).



**“Then I saw a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which represent the sevenfold Spirit of God that is sent out into every part of the earth”
(Rev 5:6 NLT)**

Judgments of the Seventieth Week

J. Dwight Pentecost, Dallas Theological Seminary



J. Dwight Pentecost

The Purposes & Names of the Tribulation

If God is a God of love, why must there be a time of great tribulation on earth?

1. To Judge the Nations: God is a God of justice as well as a God of love. His wrath must show him consistent with his balanced character (e.g., Zeph. 1:15; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev 11:18; 15:1; 16:1).
 - This will be a period when God gives those who killed his people the fruits of their sin (Rev 6:11; cf. Ps. 2:5; Jer. 25:30-32; Zech. 12:3; 2 Thess. 2:12; Rev 3:10; 6:15).
 - God has always judged sin and does so at the present, so this period is not out of line with his actions in the past (Rom. 1:18-20).
2. To Discipline Israel: Israel will need a time of difficulty to turn her heart to the Lord in order to fulfill the prophecies of the nation's restoration in repentance (Deut. 30:1-3; Isa. 1:25; 4:2-4, etc.; cf. Eschatology notes, 119c point D).
3. To Save Israel: God's mercy will be shown to Israel by saving her after this time of trouble.
 - Jeremiah 30:7 refers to the "time of Jacob's trouble" that will lead to national salvation.
 - Daniel 11:36-45 shows how God will miraculously save Israel from the attacks of Antichrist.
 - Israel's spiritual restoration is especially highlighted by Isaiah in many texts:
 1. Israel cleansed by God's judgment before the kingdom (1:25; 4:2-4; 29:1-4; 30:26b; 31:6-7)
 2. Israel reunited and gathered again to the land (11:10-13, 15-16; 43:1, 5; 49:6; 61:4; 65:8-9)
 3. Israel victorious over enemies (2:12-21; 11:14; 24:21-23; 41:11-14; 45:14; 61:2; 66:14b)
 4. Israel free from oppression (14:3-6; 42:6-7; 49:8-9)
 5. Israel believing in Messiah (2:5; 10:20-22; 25:8-9; 26:2; 29:23; 40:9; 45:17, 25; 52:3, 6-7, 9-11; 54:7-10; 62:12)
 6. Israel forgiven and righteous (1:25-27; 2:3; 4:3-4; 33:24; 44:22-24; 45:25; 48:17; 63:16)
 7. Israel blessed and rewarded by Christ (19:25; 40:10; 62:11; 61:8)
 8. Israel comforted by Christ (12:1-2; 40:1-2, 11; 49:12; 51:3; 65:18-19; 66:11-13)
 9. Israel filled/empowered by Holy Spirit as never before (32:15; 44:3; 59:21)
4. To Establish the Millennial Kingdom: The Tribulation will end with the elimination of the kingdoms of this world so they can be replaced with Christ's kingdom (Dan. 7:17-18; cf. Rev 17-18 removes Babylon before Rev 19-20 sets up Christ's reign).

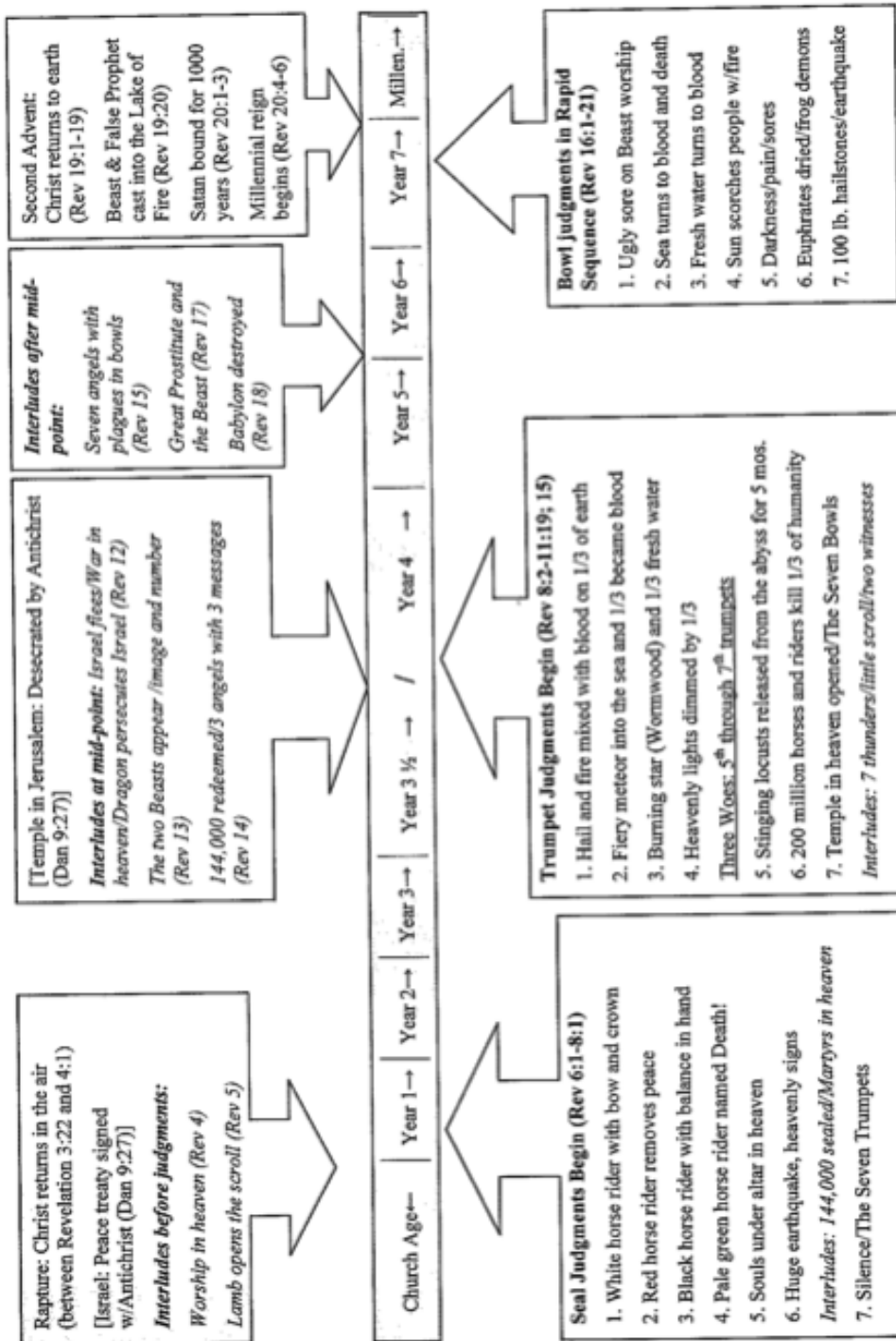
The various names for this period of time reveal some of God's purposes:

- "Day" or "Day of the LORD" (Isa. 30:23-25; 34:1-8; 35:1-10; Joel 2:28-32; 3:1-21; Zeph. 3:8, 16-20; Zech. 14:1-21) shows God has this specific time period planned in advance.
- "Tribulation" (Deut. 4:30; Matt. 24:9, 21, 29; Rev 7:14) indicates that trials will be needed to get people's attention on God's purposes.
- "Time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7) identifies Israel as a key focus of this people of testing.
- "Wrath of God" (Zeph. 1:15; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev 11:18; 15:1; 16:1) notes that this period will satisfy the righteous anger of our Creator.
- "Seven" (Dan. 9:27) gives the length of the period as seven years.

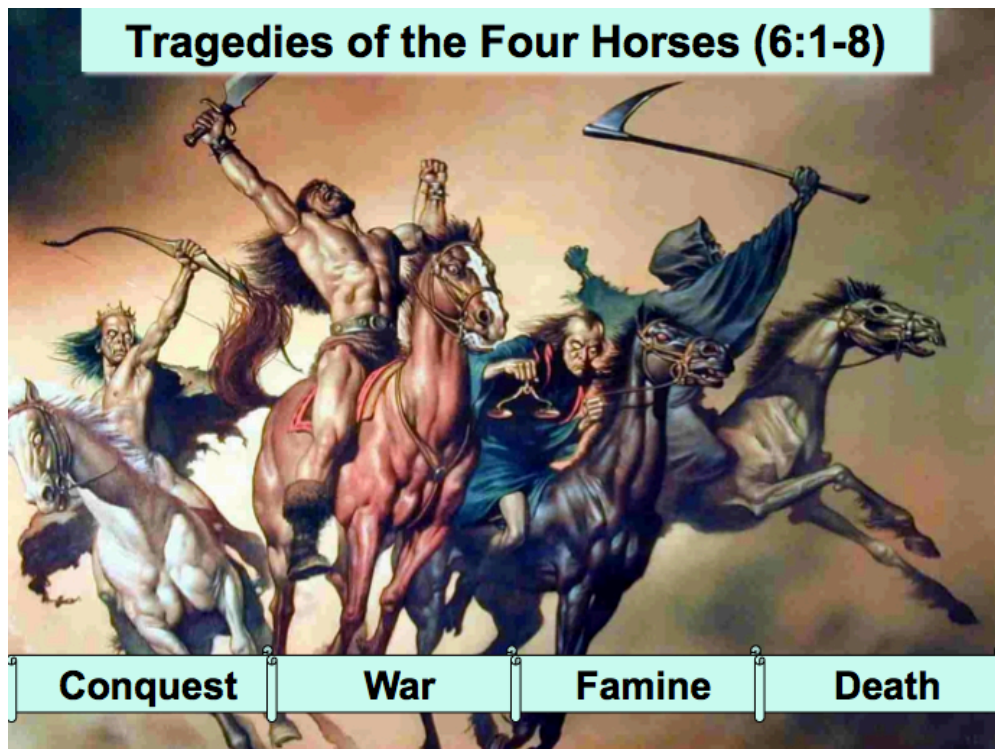
Revelation Timeline (Rev 4:1-20:6)

Adapted from Jon Tretsven, in "Advanced Studies in the New Testament" by Dr. Rick Griffith, internetseminary.org

Revelation Timeline (Rev. 4:1-20:3)



- b) Christ opens seven seals to reveal his sovereignty to judge the world and save many during the first half of the seven-year tribulation (6:1–8:5).



- (1) Christ opens seal #1 (white horse) for Antichrist to conquer the world via covenanting with Israel (cf. Dan. 9:27) to show Christ's sovereignty (6:1-2).
- (a) Many believe this horseman is Jesus due to similarities with Christ at the Second Advent (Rev 19:11-16) and the white color of the horse (1:14; 2:17; 3:4, 5, 18).⁴

⁴ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1209-10; William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1944), 94-96; Zane C. Hodges, "The First Horseman of the Apocalypse," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 19 (Oct 1962): 324-34.

- (b) However, other factors reveal this to be the future Antichrist:
- (i) The Lamb breaks the seal to enact this judgment, so the Lamb and the rider must be different persons.
 - (ii) White does not always depict what is holy (Matt. 23:27; Acts 23:3) so it may indicate that the rider only deceptively seeks to *appear* holy (cf. Matt. 24:5; crowns, 12:3; victories, 11:7; 13:7).
 - (iii) The only thing common to the riders of 6:2 and 19:11-16 is the white color. They differ in many respects, including their:
 - purposes (conquest vs. righteous retribution)
 - equipment (bow vs. sword)
 - names (anonymous vs. “Faithful and True”)
 - fellow riders (none vs. armies of heaven)
 - time (beginning vs. end of the tribulation), and
 - context (association with other evil riders vs. conquering the Antichrist).⁵
 - crown: “The word for *crown* in Revelation 6:2 is *stephanos*, which means ‘the victor’s crown.’ The crown that Jesus Christ wears is *diadema*, ‘the kingly crown’ (Rev 19:12). Antichrist could never wear the diadem, because it belongs only to the Son of God” (Wiersbe).

⁵ For details on the above points, see Daniel K. K. Wong, “The First Horseman of Revelation 6,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (April-June 1996): 212-26.

- (2) Seal #2 (red horse) brings war to depict how Antichrist controls the world as political leader (6:3-4; cf. Matt. 24:6-7a).
- (3) Seal #3 (black horse) allows Antichrist to use famine to control commodity prices to show his global economic control (6:5-6; cf. Matt. 24:7b).
- (4) Seal #4 (pale horse) affirms that death will come to over one billion people by war, famine, plague, or roaming wild beasts (6:7-8; cf. Matt. 24:9).
- (5) Seal #5 depicts God's reassurance of martyrs in heaven that he alone is sovereign, and they should trust in his plan (6:9-11).
- (6) Seal #6 shows men fearing a glimpse of Sovereign God more than an earthquake leveling mountains and the opening of the sky (6:12-17; cf. Matt. 24:7c)!





- (7) A parenthesis between seals #6-7 provides hope that God will be merciful even in judgment by saving believing Jews and Gentiles from every nation (7:1-17).

See the chart on “Chronology of Revelation” on page 340 for the concept of various parentheses in the book of Revelation.

- (a) The sealing of 144,000 Jews, composed of 12,000 from each tribe, shows God's mercy on Israel even during the Tribulation (7:1-8).

Many claim that these 144,000 are the church, such as Thomas Schreiner at Southern Seminary, who sees it as a symbolic number. He gives eight reasons—to which I give eight responses:

Church View of Schreiner		Israel View Support and Response
1	Rev 6 asks who can withstand God's wrath, and Rev 7 answers with all sealed, so this must be the Church	The 144,000 Jews listed answer the question, so this does not require being spiritualized
2	Rev 14 shows that the sealed are the redeemed, so this is comprehensive	The 144,000 are depicted as a portion of those redeemed, which also includes Gentiles
3	In Rev 5, John looks at the Lion, but he sees the Lamb, so in Rev 7 he hears about 144,000 but sees a multitude, as the two are equated	The text argues against equating them as it counts the 144,000 but notes that the multitude cannot be counted
4	Rev often uses symbolic numbers, so the 144,000 means 12 x 12,000	Every number in Revelation makes complete sense as a literal number
5	Jews are called “the synagogue of Satan” (2:9; 3:9) so Jews are not portrayed positively in Revelation	Jews are certainly portrayed positively in Rev 7 since 144,000 will be sealed and witness for God
6	This list of tribes matches no other Bible list with Judah first to show God's people under Jesus' authority from the tribe of Judah	“Scripture contains 29 lists of the tribes of Israel” (Walvoord, <i>BKC</i>) with varying configurations (cf. p. 379)
7	A list of future Jews is not possible since no Jew today knows his tribe of origin	God knows the origin of each Jew, so we do not need to know this today
8	If we take the 144,000 literally, then this passage would not be our story but instead the story of Jews	Most of the Bible records the OT story of the Jews, but this still is the foundation of the Church

However, the 144,000 are Jews who will trust Christ since:

- (i) The text could not be clearer that they are Jews in that it shows exactly which tribe each comes from.
- (ii) “Nowhere else in the Bible do a dozen references to the 12 tribes mean the church.”⁶
- (iii) Many more than 144,000 Christians are sealed to bring forth the message salvation during the church age, so why would it be so incredible that 144,000 of the present 15 million Jews in the world would also have a similar task in the future?
- (iv) This group is contrasted with Gentile believers in the next section.

144,000	Great Multitude
7:1-8	7:9-17
Jews	Gentiles from all nations
Numbered	Cannot be counted
Listed by tribe of Israel	From every nation, tribe, people and language
“seal of God on their foreheads” (7:3-4)	“washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white” (7:14)
On earth	Standing in heaven

This is not the *total* number of Jews saved in the Tribulation but only those specifically “sealed” (7:3-4). Romans 11:26-27 teaches that “all Israel will be saved” at this time. Jews will finally place their faith in Jesus Christ as Messiah after centuries of rejecting him! Isaiah especially highlights Israel’s spiritual restoration throughout his prophecy (see references on p. 371).

What is the significance of the sealing of these Jews?

“While we are not told explicitly in Scripture that the 144,000 Jews are God’s special witnesses, and that the Gentile host is saved through their ministry, this appears to be a logical deduction; otherwise, why are they associated in this chapter? The parallel with Matthew 24:14 also indicates that the 144,000 will witness for the Lord during the Tribulation.”⁷

⁶ Walvoord, *BKC*, 2:949.

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996, c1989), on Rev 7:1-17.

Why No Tribe of Dan?

“Much speculation has arisen about why the tribe of Dan is omitted. Joseph and one of his two sons, Manasseh, are listed, but Ephraim, Joseph’s other son, is omitted. Thus if Dan were included, there would have been 13 tribes. According to J. B. Smith, Scripture contains 29 lists of the tribes of Israel in the Old and New Testaments and in no case are more than 12 tribes mentioned (*A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 130). The tribe omitted was usually Levi, from which the priesthood came. Inasmuch as it is normal to have only 12 and not 13 tribes, the omission of Dan is not significant. Perhaps Dan was omitted here because it was one of the first tribes to go into idolatry (Jud. 18:30; cf. 1 Kings 12:28-29). However, Dan is mentioned in Ezekiel 48:2 in the millennial land distribution.

“The most important fact taught here is that God continues to watch over Israel even in the time of Israel’s great distress. There is no justification whatever for spiritualizing either the number or the names of the tribes in this passage, to make them represent the church.”⁸

- (b) The salvation of Gentiles from every nation indicates God’s merciful fulfillment of the Great Commission during the Tribulation (7:9-17).



- (8) Seal #7 has no judgment but introduces the trumpet judgments in response to the prayer for vindication by the Tribulation martyrs (8:1-5; cf. 6:10).



⁸ Walvoord, *BKC*, 2:949.

Theories of Literary Structures of Revelation

H. Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, 18

Theories of Literary Structures of Revelation

LITERARY CONSTRUCTION: 6:1-17; 8:1-9:21 and 11:15-19; 15:1-16:12 and 16:17-21:27										
	SEALS			TRUMPETS			BOWLS			
	1-6	()	7	1-6	()	7	()	1-6	()	7
A parenthesis between 6th and 7th judgments in each series:			7:1-17			10:1-11:14				16:13-16
A parenthesis between the trumpet judgment and the bowl series:								12:1-14:20		
A parenthesis between the bowl series and the description of the second coming of Jesus										17:1-19:10

SUGGESTED INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF THE SEALS, TRUMPETS, AND BOWLS:

Judgments are seen as occurring simultaneously, with repetition showing the intensification of the judgments.

Seals
Trumpets
Bowls

This consecutive arrangement envisions a total of twenty-one judgments.

Seals • Trumpets • Bowls

This telescopic arrangement has the seventh seal introducing the trumpet series and being explained by it, and the seventh trumpet introducing the bowl series and is explained by it. So, the seven bowls equal the seventh trumpet and the seven trumpets are the seventh seal.

Adapted from Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), by permission.

2. The second half of the Tribulation (Great Tribulation) in trumpet and bowl judgments shows Christ's sovereignty over the entire earth, its religions, and its political powers (8:6–19:10).
 - a) Angels sound seven trumpets of judgment to reveal Christ's sovereign authority to judge the world and protect those who trust him (8:6–11:19).
 - (1) Trumpet #1 burns up one third of the earth's vegetation by hail and fire (8:6-7).
 - (2) Trumpet #2 destroys one third of the sea creatures and ships by a huge fiery object which turns one third of the saltwater seas into blood (8:8-9).
 - (3) Trumpet #3 kills many people through the pollution of one third of the fresh water caused by the falling of Wormwood, a blazing star (8:10-11).
 - (4) Trumpet #4 causes partial darkness from the striking of a third of the sun, moon, and stars (8:12).
 - (5) An eagle warns of the seriousness of the last three trumpet blasts that affect man directly in contrast to the first four trumpets that destroy man's resources (8:13).
 - (6) Trumpet #5 (woe #1) releases terrible, supernatural locust-like creatures to torment only non-Christians for five months (9:1-12).



- (7) Trumpet #6 (woe #2) of supernatural horse-and-rider creatures empower 200 million soldiers to slay one third of Earth, yet people still cling to idols (9:13-21).

Euphrates Angels (Trumpet #6)

I heard the size of their army, which was 200 million mounted troops (9:16)

Then the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were turned loose to kill one-third of all the people on earth (9:15)

Revelation 9:14 NLT
And the voice said to the sixth angel who held the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great Euphrates River."

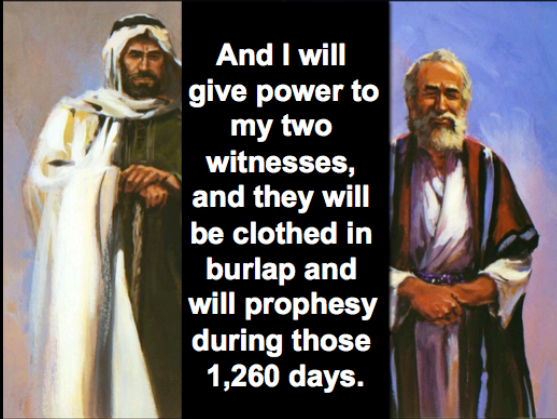
- (8) A parenthesis between trumpets #6-7 shows Tribulation believers will experience God's protection while unbelievers receive his wrath (10:1–11:14).
- (a) Undisclosed judgments and John eating a little scroll signify the sweetness of God's Word to believers protected from judgment and its bitterness to unbelievers under his wrath (Rev 10).
- (b) Two witnesses will prophesy and kill their enemies for 3.5 years, be martyred and resurrected, and then 7000 enemies will die in an earthquake (11:1-14)

See the 2-page study in the introduction on pages 329-330.

The Temple (11:1-13)

- Heavenly?
- or
- Earthly?

The Two Witnesses (11:3)



And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will be clothed in burlap and will prophesy during those 1,260 days.

MONDAY, MARCH 19, 2012

NEW STRAITS TIMES | PAGE 13

PRIME NEWS

10,000 to join 'March to Jerusalem'

UNITED: Gathering at Stadium Malawati to show solidarity with Palestinians

MICHAEL MURTY

KUALA LUMPUR

michaelmurry@nst.com.my

ABOUT 10,000 people are expected to attend Malaysia's edition of the Global March to Jerusalem (MyGMJ), a worldwide movement aiming to free Jerusalem and Palestine without war, at Stadium Malawati in Shah Alam on March 30.

The gathering will be held in conjunction with other global marches worldwide and will see participants from Palestine and Israel's neighbouring countries march as close as they can to

Jerusalem in a bid to free the city and its people as well as liberate Palestine.

Other supporting countries will also hold events in their cities. Malaysia is one of 131 countries supporting the movement.

More than 600 Malaysians are expected to participate in the gathering.

MyGMJ chairman Dr Mohd Tahir Rahman said the gathering was in line to calls for an end to policies affecting the people of Jerusalem.

Tahir said the movement was non-violent and had garnered support from various religious leaders and international figures.



STOP THE OPPRESSION

A flash mob acting out scenes depicting the plight of the Palestinians at Dataran DBKL in Jalan Raja Laut, Kuala Lumpur, yesterday. About 120 students from Taylor's University, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa and other institutions of higher learning participated. Pic by Salhani Ibrahim

- (9) Trumpet #7 (woe #3) has no specific judgment connected with it as it introduces the seven bowl judgments (11:15-19).
- b) A parenthesis between the trumpet and bowl judgments of Satan's activity and the final judgments assures believers of their triumph and of unbelievers' judgment (Rev 12–14).
- (1) Extra teaching on Satan and his activity to thwart God in the Tribulation shows Israel's persecution and what believers at that time should do (Rev 12–13).
- (a) Satan has long persecuted Israel and Christ (Rev 12).
- (i) Israel, in the sign of a pregnant woman, travails to bring Jesus Christ into the world as a man (12:1-2).

Is this woman Mary since she was the mother of Jesus? No.



Many claim that this woman signifies the church.⁹

Mounce, though a premillennial scholar, identifies the woman as “the messianic community, the ideal Israel ... the church (Rev 12:17). The people of God are one throughout all redemptive history.”

However, the text clearly shows the woman to be Israel:

- a. The woman brings forth Christ, which Israel did (whereas the Church did not bring forth Christ).
- b. “The woman symbolized Israel, as indicated by Genesis 37:9-11, where the sun and the moon referred to Jacob and Rachel, Joseph’s parents.
- c. “The stars in the woman’s crown clearly related to the 12 sons of Jacob and identified the woman as Israel fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant. J. B. Smith cites Isaiah 60:1-3, 20 as proof that the sun refers to Israel’s future glory (*A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 182).”¹⁰

⁹ Robert L. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 236.

¹⁰ Walvoord, *BKC*, emphasis mine.

- (ii) Satan and his demons, signified by a dragon with stars, unsuccessfully seek to destroy the infant Jesus (12:3-4).

- (iii) Jesus escapes Satan in his ascension to await his millennial rule while Israel is protected in the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation (12:5-6).

- (iv) Satan is cast from heaven where he accuses saints and unsuccessfully seeks to destroy Israel in the Great Tribulation (12:7-21).





- (b) Satan's agents (the Antichrist and False Prophet) are identified to enable readers of the Tribulation Period to resist them (Rev 13).
- (i) Antichrist (beast out of the sea) gains a worldwide following by unbelievers through satanic power and persecutes Christians (13:1-10).
- (ii) The False Prophet (beast out of the earth) glorifies the Antichrist and persecutes Christians who lack the mark of the Antichrist (13:11-18).



Who is the Beast?



(2) The triumph of 144,000 Jews and Antichrist's judgment (with his system) preview the judgments at the end of the Tribulation in chapters 15–19 (Rev 14).

(a) The triumph of the 144,000 Jews who escape martyrdom in the Tribulation anticipates Christ's triumph at his Second Coming (14:1-5).

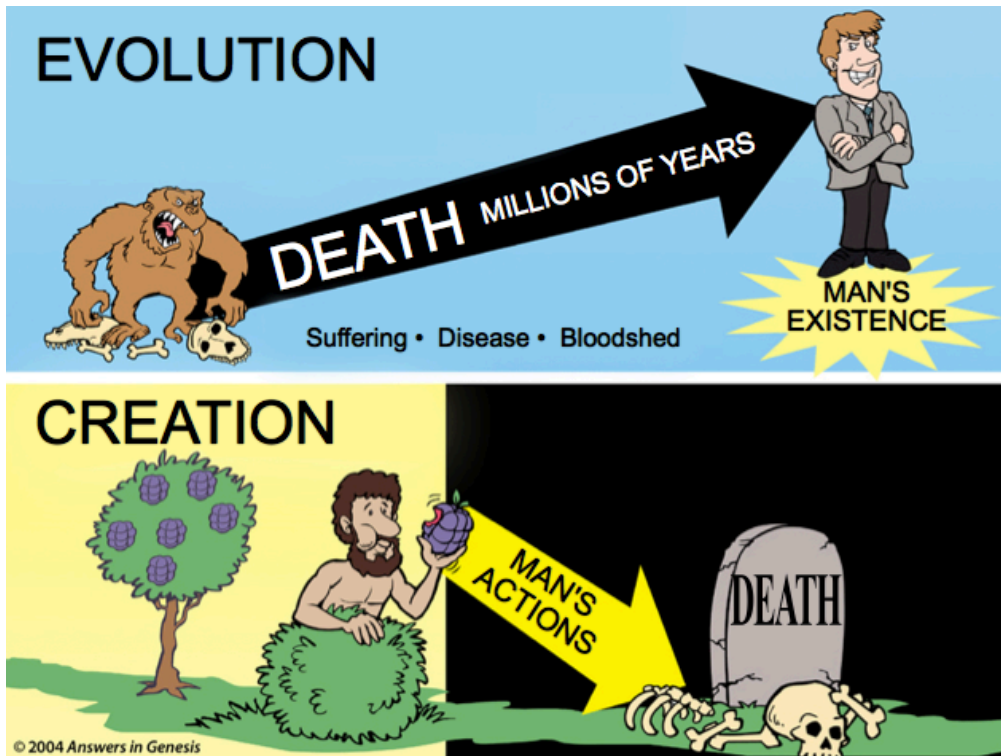
(b) Three angels warn to fear God by rejecting the Antichrist mark as his system is doomed to urge believers to wait faithfully for Christ's return (14:6-13).

Revelation 14:6-7

⁶And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an **eternal gospel** to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

⁷and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; **worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.**"

Satan is seeking to destroy belief today in Christ as creator through the lie of evolution...



If one destroys the foundation in creation, then he also destroys the final creation where the first creation finds its consummation.



- (c) Christ's final judgment of unbelievers, with the assistance of three angels, is previewed through the figure of grapes trodden in a winepress (14:14-20).



- c) Angels prepare and pour out seven bowls of judgment to reveal Christ's sovereign authority to judge the world just before his return (Rev 15–16).
- (1) Preparing the bowl judgments heightens the reader's expectation for the climactic bowl judgments that immediately precede Christ's Return (Rev 15).



- (2) Angels pour out seven bowls of judgment to reveal Christ's sovereign authority to judge the world just before his return (Rev 16).
- (a) Bowl #1 afflicts ugly, painful sores on Antichrist's followers (16:1-2).
- (b) Bowl #2 kills saltwater marine life by turning seas to blood (16:3).

- (c) Bowl #3 kills all fresh water marine life by turning all rivers and springs into blood (16:4-7).
- (d) Bowl #4 burns unrepentant people with the sun's fire (16:8-9).
- (e) Bowl #5 plunges the Antichrist's kingdom into darkness while the sores and burns continue, but they still refuse to repent (16:10-11).
- (f) Bowl #6 dries up the Euphrates for Oriental armies to cross against nations at Armageddon, but Satan will seek to gather them to fight Christ (16:12-16).

What happens when the normal use of language is not followed?

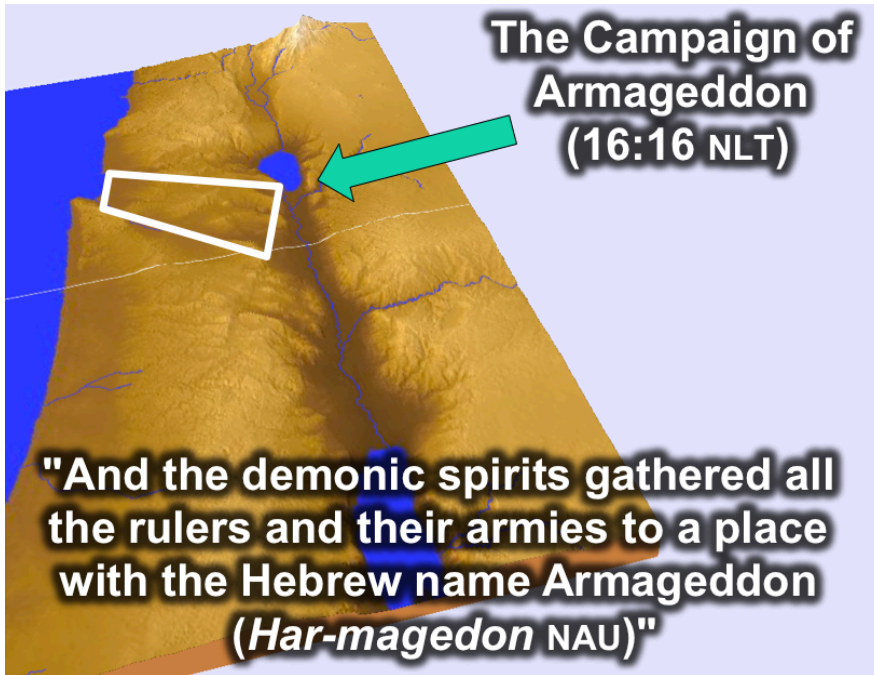
100 commentaries

57 interpretations!

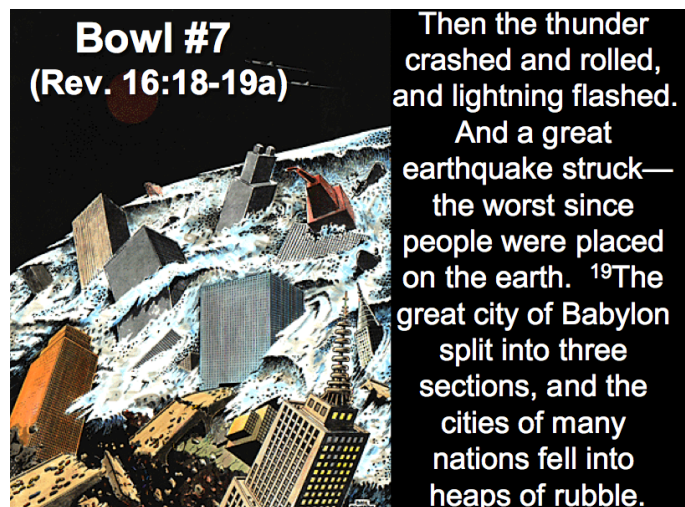
Revelation 16:12
The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river **Euphrates**, and its water was **dried up** to prepare the way for the kings from the East.

Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait
0 100 200 300 400
Kilometers
© World Sites Atlas (sitesatlas.com)

Arabian Sea
INDIAN OCEAN



- (g) Bowl #7 produces both an earthquake that levels mountains and islands, and one hundred-pound hailstones (16:17-21).



This ends the Tribulation cycle of 21 judgments and immediately precedes the return of Christ. What follows in chapters 17–18 is parenthetical with a focus on Mystery Babylon.

- d) The fall of the world system (or USA in pp. 409-13) with remorse on earth and rejoicing in heaven shows "Babylon" is removed before Christ rules his kingdom (17:1–19:10).



- (1) The fall of the religious and commercial system encourages readers that it will be gone before Christ installs his own kingdom (17:1–18:8).
- (a) The fall of world's religious system, seen in the Harlot, Babylon the Great, comes after Antichrist is worshiped in the middle of the Tribulation (Rev 17).
- (i) The fall of the religious world is signified by a prostitute on a beast with seven heads and ten horns who adulterates with false doctrine (17:1-6).
- (ii) Antichrist's ten-nation confederacy replaces the apostate world church with self-worship at the Tribulation midpoint (17:7-18; cf. Dan. 9:27).
- (b) The fall of the world commercial system shows Christ superior to this system and the need for it to be removed before he sets up his kingdom (18:1-8).

Continued on page 414 after the Revelation 17–18 excursus ...

What is the Babylon of Revelation 17–18?

An Evaluation of Various Views

Introduction

- A. The city of Babylon is the first city noted in Scripture, having been built by Nimrod (Gen. 10:10). It is also the origin of false teaching about God as Nimrod invented mother and son worship (later adopted by Egyptian and other religions, including Catholicism). After the city achieved prominence under King Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed Jerusalem (605-586 BC), Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC, and the city has lain virtually desolate for centuries.
- B. One key issue is whether the city's fall in 539 BC fulfilled prophecies that it would never again be inhabited (Isa. 13:20; cf. Jer. 50:23, 39-40; 51:37).¹¹ This is important because if the prophecy is unfulfilled, then Babylon will still be rebuilt and *then* destroyed entirely.
- C. With this brief background, Revelation 17–18 describes in detail the destruction of a world-powerful entity under the image of a harlot riding a beast. This has often been called “End Times Babylon” because of the adjective “Mystery” (17:5) in the title. However, a better translation is: “This mysterious title was found on her head: BABYLON...”¹² In the broadest sense, this entity has three main dimensions: political, economic, and religious.
- D. Major Players of Revelation 17–18
 1. The Prostitute called Babylon (17:1-6)
 2. The Waters (17:1, 15)
 3. The Beast (17:3a, 7-8, 11)
 4. The 7 Heads (17:3b, 7)
 5. The 10 Horns (17:3c, 7, 12-13, 16)
 6. The 7 Hills (17:9)
 7. The 7 Kings (17:10)
 8. The Great City reigning over the earth (17:18)

¹¹ Isaiah and Jeremiah both note that Babylon was to be destroyed literally, suddenly, and completely. Isaiah says: “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there...” (Isa. 13:19-21). And Jeremiah says: “How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!” (50:23); “Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wolves shall dwell there, and the ostriches shall dwell therein; and it shall no more be inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, saith Jehovah, so shall no man dwell there, neither shall any son of man sojourn therein” (50:39, 40); “And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for jackals, an astonishment, and a hissing, without inhabitant” (51:37). These authors argue that Babylon has yet to be rebuilt and destroyed: Richard Hayes McCartney, *The City of the Antichrist: Babylon in Chaldea* (New York: Revell, 1917); Charles Dyer, *The Rise of Babylon* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1991). They point out that Babylon has never been without inhabitants so that the prophecy yet remains unfulfilled. In fact, in 331 Babylon received Alexander the Great with open arms. Some say it is prophesied that Babylon’s stones will never be used to rebuild other Arab cities, yet many Arab villages and towns have been built from Babylonian stone, such as Seleucia, Ctesiphon, Al Modain, and Kufa (G. H. Pember, *The Antichrist, Babylon, and the Coming of the Kingdom* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2d. ed., 1888]). If this is true, these verses then indicate that Babylon has yet to be utterly overthrown, meaning that a future rebuilding of the city is in God’s plan before it is actually finally overthrown so these prophecies have a yet future fulfillment.

¹² NIV Study Bible text note on 17:5.

Identical Symbols of Rev. 17–18

Prostitute (17:1)	=	Great City (17:18)
Beast (17:3a)	=	8th King (17:11)
7 Heads (17:7)	=	7 Hills (17:9) 7 Kings (17:10)
10 Horns (17:3c, 7, 16)	=	10 Kings (17:12-13)

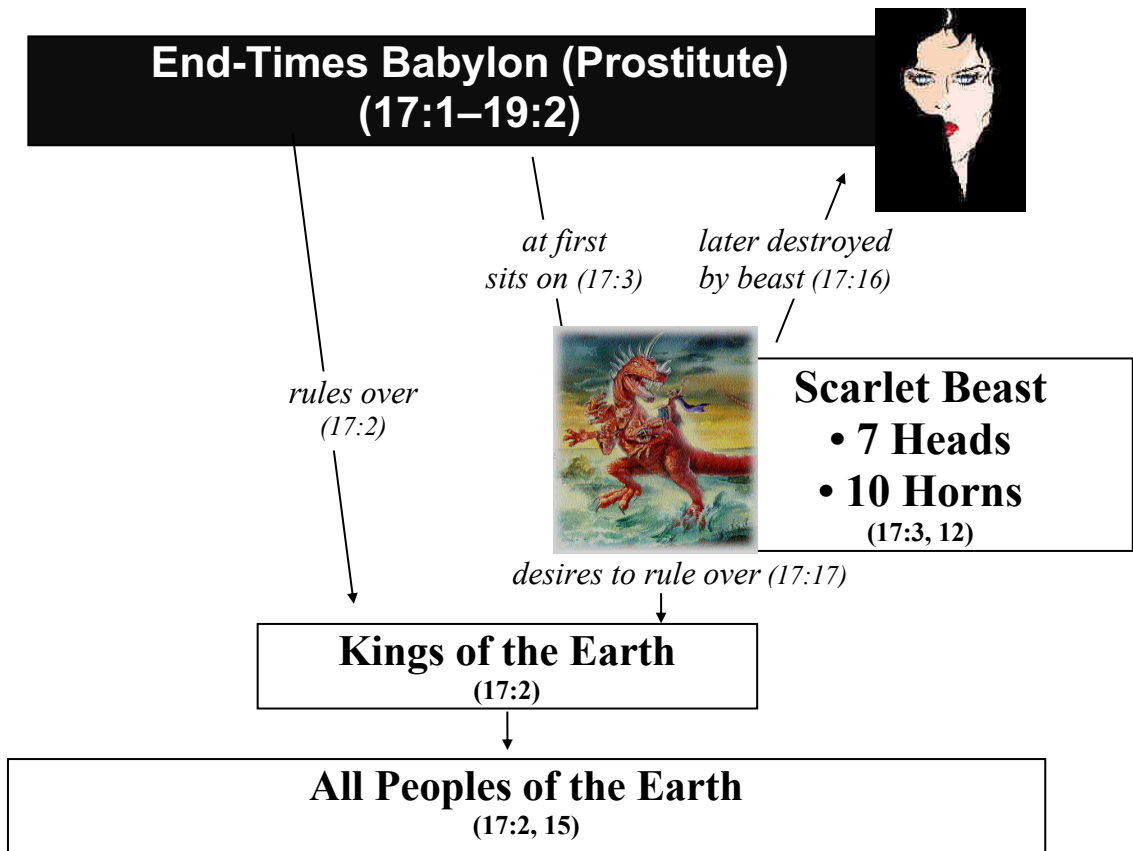
E. Characteristics

1. She is guilty of religious apostasy or idolatry that contaminates the world since the image of a prostitute is used of her (17:1a, 5; cf. 14:8). The harlot in Scripture sometimes depicts one who has strayed from her religious moorings in a “spiritual adultery” (e.g., Hosea 4:10-12). However, it also describes the idolatry of nations that had never trusted in the Lord in the first place, such as Nineveh (Nah. 3:1, 4), Tyre (Isa. 23:15-17), and Babylon (Jer. 23:8-9).
 - a) Her blasphemy indicates her heretical stance (17:3).
 - b) She is filled with abominations (17:4-5).
 - c) Her spiritual association stems from the city of Babylon (17:5), which was the original center of false worship.

2. She has a world influence politically shown in her sitting on many waters (17:1b), which is a figure for many “peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages” (17:15), indicating an ecumenical nature. The breadth of her authority is over both the rulers and common people in the earth (17:2).

Control of the World Political System:		
<u>7 Heads</u>	<u>10 Kings</u>	<u>Beast (8th King)</u>
Roman	Worldwide	Worldwide
Consecutive	Simultaneous	Controls 10 Kings
Past	Future	Future
17:9-11	17:12	17:13

3. She initially controls the Antichrist since she rides the beast (17:3). The beast is a world ruler called the Antichrist (cf. Rev 13:1-10) who himself controls two political entities: a revived Roman Empire preceded by the rule of seven kingdoms and another contemporary alignment of ten regions of the world (17:3, 9, 12).



4. She is exceptionally wealthy, as seen in her precious gems, clothes, metals (17:4), and numerous other products (18:3, 11-16, 23).
5. She persecutes the people of God (17:6; 18:24).
6. She associates with Rome in that she “sits” on seven hills (17:9). Given that Rome is known from ancient times as a city built upon seven hills, this confirms that the Babylon of Revelation 17–18 has a link with Rome, the kingdom “that is” in power during John’s time of writing (17:10).
7. She will be entirely destroyed by the Antichrist and his ten-nation confederacy (17:16a) by fire (17:16b; 18:8) in only one hour (18:10, 17, 19).



**Views on
End Times
Babylon**

- The **World System**
- A **Religion** (Islam, Catholics, Astrology, One World Religion/New Age)
- A **City** (Babylon, Rome, Jerusalem)
- A **Nation**

The Identity of End Times Babylon

A. World System (Political, Economic, and Religious)

1. Support

- a) The worldwide influence of End Times Babylon could indicate that this entity is the world system itself, organized against God (17:2).
- b) All of the present kingdoms of the world must be removed before Christ sets up his own kingdom (20:1-6).

2. Problems

- a) Reference to End Times Babylon as a city (17:18; 18:21), which influences Rome (17:9), refers to an entity smaller than the world system as a whole.
- b) The destruction of End Times Babylon will be lamented by unbelieving political rulers (18:9-10), businessmen (18:11-16), and sailors (18:17-19). Since these mourners would be part of the world system themselves, they wouldn't be able to lament the destruction of the world system from afar.

B. Religions

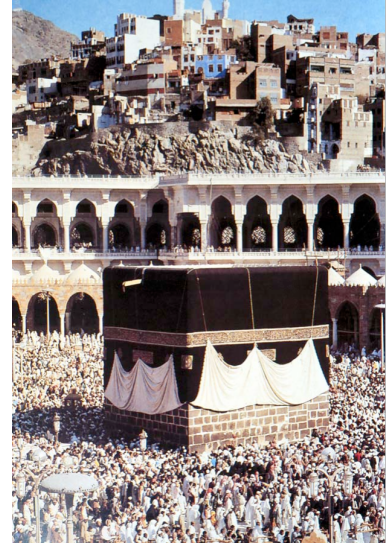
1. Islam¹³

a) Support

- (1) Islam has been a great persecutor of the church (17:6).
- (2) Immorality is prevalent in Islam in its polygamy and rape.
- (3) Islam has recently become a wealthy religion due to the vast Mid-East oil reserves and control of OPEC.

b) Problems

- (1) Though some Mid-East sheiks are vastly affluent, Muslims generally are not wealthy (17:4).
- (2) Immorality within Islam seems not to be any more common than in other institutions and religions.
- (3) While Islam, through its association with OPEC, has increased its say in the world, these entities are not presently controlling a ten-nation confederacy (beast) or Rome.

2. Roman Catholicism¹⁴

a) Support

- (1) Babylon was the source of false worship. Much of Catholicism has come from Babylon—mother-and-son worship in particular.¹⁵ Add to these parallels in obelisks, relics, pilgrimages, indulgences, purgatory, pontiffs, celibate priests, transubstantiation, and both the Easter and Winter Festivals.
- (2) With its seven hills, Rome is the center of Catholicism (17:9).

b) Problems

- (1) Even though the RCC derives many of its teachings from the Babylonian mystery religion, this does not equate the two entities.
- (2) The seven-hilled city and End Times Babylon are not identical since the woman rides the beast with these seven heads/hills (17:3, 7).
- (3) Italy has one of the weakest currencies in the world today, so it seems unlikely that the Vatican will achieve the economic envy of the planet.
- (4) While Catholicism is wealthy, it is overall in decline.



¹³ James M. McKeever, "Who is End Times Babylon?" END 151 (April 1991): 1-11 declares that a Muslim-OPEC partnership is in view; Ramon Bennett, *Philistine: The Great Deception* (Jerusalem: Arm of Salvation, 1995) declares that Islam is the greatest threat in the world today.

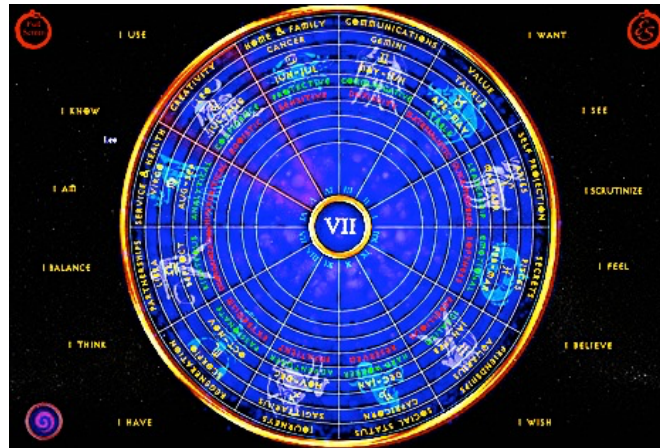
¹⁴ Most Reformers saw Catholics as End Times Babylon (e.g., John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, 2:12); Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* (Riverside, CA: Woodrow Evan. Assoc., Inc., 1966, 1981), 7, 12.

¹⁵ See Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*.

3. Astrology¹⁶

a) Support

- (1) The prominence of worshipping the stars is well known as horoscopes appear in every major newspaper and increasingly on the Internet.
- (2) Ancient Babylon was known for emphasizing astronomy and astrology, so the association with End Times Babylon would be consistent.
- (3) End Times Babylon is a home for demons (18:2), which describes the satanic associations of astrology.



b) Problems

- (1) It seems unlikely that politicians, merchants, and sailors would lament the demise of astrology (18:9-20).
- (2) “Babylon” is a home for demons (18:2) and destroyed by fire (17:16; 18:8), which better indicates a physical location than a religion or philosophy.
- (3) No musicians, businessmen, or marriages better indicates a place (18:21-24).

¹⁶ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970; reprint, Bantam, 1973), 103-23.

4. One-World Religion

a) Apostate Church Centered in Rome¹⁷

(1) Support

- (a) End Times Babylon is a city with significant influence (17:18; 18:18, 21). Rome has had this kind of influence both then and now through the RCC.
- (b) The harlot has a place of authority over “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (17:15), so she rules the entire world politically beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire. This could be said of the RCC and apostate church.
- (c) The association with the seven hills (17:9) is Roman, but the ten-nation Roman confederacy destroys End Times Babylon (17:12), thus showing they are different.
- (d) Rome could be destroyed in an hour (18:10, 19).
- (e) The Apostate Church has absorbed many demonic influences (18:2).

(2) Problems

- (a) The Apostate Church does not have the organized wealth characteristic of this Babylon (18:9, 11-13).
- (b) End Times Babylon is a limited geographical entity that has a worldwide influence, seen in its quick destruction (18:10, 19), marriages (18:23), and the fact that people will see its destruction from afar (18:9).

b) World Council of Churches¹⁸

(1) Support

- (a) The WCC became an entity that united various religious systems in 1948.
- (b) This view reflects the compromise of truth characteristic of the entity being deemed to be "Babylon" (17:5).

(2) Problems

- (a) The WCC influence increasingly decreases rather than increases.
- (b) End Times Babylon is repeatedly called a city (17:18; 18:18, 21).

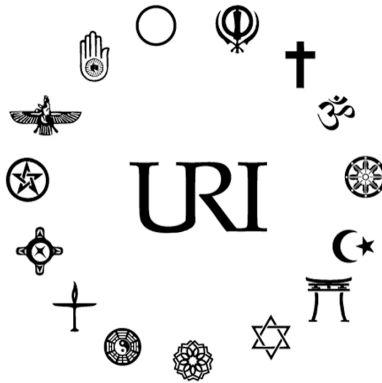
¹⁷ Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* 2d ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1995, 2006), 309. John Walvoord sees this as likely “a world religion which could conceivably embrace all branches of Christianity—Roman, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant—as well as non-Christian religions” (“Revival of Rome,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126 [October-December 1969]: 325; “Revelation,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary* [Wheaton: SP Publication, 1983], 17:6 notes). An adaptation of this view is to see this one world apostate church as the sum of the RCC (Roman Catholic Church) and the WCC (World Council of Churches).

¹⁸ Rene Pache, “The Ecumenical Movement, Part 4: Moving Toward the Super-Church,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 108 (April-June 1951): 201.

C. United Religions Organization (including New Age Movement)¹⁹

1. Support

- a) The diverse elements of “Babylon” (17:1, 15) also make up the UR.
- b) The UR includes members of every religion but evangelical Christians.



2. Problems

- a) The UR has yet to become a significant influence in the world.
- b) End Times Babylon is often called a city (17:18; 18:18, 21).

D. Cities

1. Babylon, Iraq²⁰

a) Support

- (1) The natural reading of "Babylon" is to take it at face value, meaning the city of Babylon.
- (2) Although Babylon today is still primarily in ruins, Saddam Hussein began rebuilding it in the mid-1980s and continues to this day.
- (3) John said that End Times Babylon is a city (Rev 17:18).

¹⁹ Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Are Living in the End Times?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1999), 177-78; W. B. Howard, *Endtime 8* (May/June 1998): 12-14.

²⁰W. Glyn Evans, "Will Babylon Be Restored?" 2 Parts. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 107 (July-September 1950): 335-42 and (October-December 1950): 481-87; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 279, 283, 288-89; Charles Dyer and Angela Elwell Hunt, *The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1991), 158, 209-210. Arguing against the literal Babylon, Iraq is Homer Heater, Jr., "Do the Prophets Teach that Babylonia Will Be Built in the Eschaton?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (March 1998): 23-43.

b) Problems

- (1) John referred to this Babylon as a "Mystery," implying that the literal city of Babylon is not meant.
- (2) It would be incredible, if not impossible, for even a rebuilt city of Babylon to attain worldwide wealth and prominence as the End Times Babylon. Present-day Iraq is virtually economically bankrupt and unlikely to rebuild Babylon to be more than just a tourist site.
- (3) The city referred to in Revelation 17:18 is indeed a city, but this city seems to be Rome more than Babylon: "The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth." Since Rome ruled the Roman Empire when John wrote this book, it is the more likely candidate than Babylon.

2. Catholicism (papal Rome) in Revelation 17, but Babylon, Iraq in Revelation 18.²¹

a) Support

- (1) In Revelation 17, Babylon is a woman; in chapter 18, she is a city.
- (2) In Revelation 17, she is End Times Babylon; in Rev 18, she is simply a city.
- (3) In chapter 17, the ten kings destroy Babylon, probably in the middle of the Tribulation period; in chapter 18, these same kings lament over the destruction of literal Babylon, which is destroyed at the end of the Tribulation period or when the Lord appears.
- (4) In chapter 17, Babylon is drunk with the blood of "saints and martyrs of Jesus" (17:6). In chapter 18, Babylon is intoxicated with the blood of the prophets and saints and all of them that were slain upon the earth (18:24). The inclusiveness of Babylon's drunkenness indicates she is a different thing than End Times Babylon in chapter 17. First, we have papal Rome (Rev 17); then, we have the world of evil wrapped up in one city (Rev 18).
- (5) The destruction of the city is a sudden thing. The phrase "in one hour" occurs several times in Revelation 18. This destruction is like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. There is some evidence that "End Times Babylon" (chapter 17) is destroyed over time. But literal Babylon "in one hour."
- (6) Jeremiah's commands to "flee her" (Jer. 50:8; 51:6, 9) were not directed to the people of old Babylon since many of them did not obey (e.g., Daniel). It is intended, therefore, to the people of the end-time.
- (7) Some of the expressions adopted by John in Revelation 18 are taken from Isaiah and Jeremiah's descriptions of old Babylon. They all refer to the same literal, restored Babylon of the end times.
- (8) Babylon's particular sin in chapter 17 is spiritual fornication, and Babylon's sin in chapter 18 is evil commercialism. This agrees with Zechariah 5:8, where wickedness is personified as a woman.

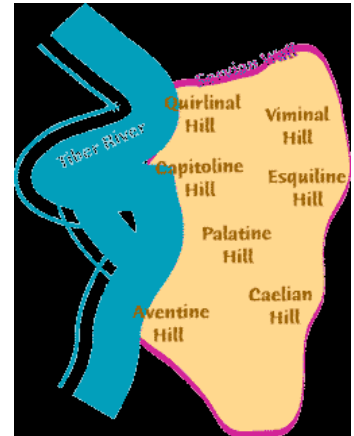
²¹ Pember cites the first four arguments; the remaining arguments are from William R. Newell, *The Revelation* (Chicago: Scripture Press, 1935).

- b) Problems (compare these with those of the same number above)
- (1) It is not true that in Revelation 17, Babylon is only a woman and in Revelation 18, she is a city, for "the woman that you saw is the great city..." (17:18). The two images are thus interchangeable. Also, the Babylon of chapter 18 is called a prostitute again later in 19:2.
 - (2) The introduction notes that "mystery" is likely not part of the title. Since elsewhere the title is simply "Babylon" (18:2, 10, 21), the entity probably does not have "mystery" in the title at all.
 - (3) The kings who lament Babylon's destruction (18:9) are not said to be the same kings as those comprising the ten horns (17:7). Also, given that this entire account (Rev 17–18) appears after the bowl judgments at the end of the Tribulation (Rev 16), the chronology of the book of Revelation shows End Times Babylon to be destroyed at the end of the Tribulation too.
 - (4) The supposed contrasts between whom Babylon persecuted in the two chapters are forced. In both chapters, she tormented saints (17:6; 18:20, 24). That prophets and apostles are noted in 18:20, 24, whereas martyrs ("those who bore testimony" NIV) are noted in 17:6 is not a contrast as much as an inclusive of both.
 - (5) Those teaching this combined papal/Iraq view do not give any support that the destruction of "End Times Babylon" (deemed papal Rome of Rev 17) is not sudden. The only time reference in chapter 17 is the same period as chapter 18. The time in which the beast shares power with the ten-nation confederacy is also "one hour" (17:12), which occurs just before the return of Christ (17:14; 19:19), probably after the hour-long destruction of Babylon (18:10, 17, 19).
 - (6) Even if Jeremiah's commands to leave Babylon apply only to the end-time city, this still would not warrant changing the identity of Babylon in Revelation 17 to another entity in Revelation 18.
 - (7) John's use of the prophetic language of Isaiah and Jeremiah does not equate the two Babylons. John elsewhere employs prophetic language in a heightened sense. For example, in Isaiah 65:20, the "new heavens and new earth" is where most people live beyond 100, which must be the millennium since death still exists; however, John employs a new meaning to this exact phrase by declaring that death is eradicated (Rev 21:4).
 - (8) Spiritual fornication (Rev 17) is not contrasted with evil commercialism (Rev 18), yielding separate entities. While the emphasis of chapter 18 is indeed trade, spiritual sin is also noted in chapter 18 with Babylon's association with demons (18:2), evil spirits (18:2), adulteries (18:3, 9; *porneia* is the same word as in 17:2, 4), and her "magic spell" (18:23). Similarly, her wealth is noted in 17:4.
 - (9) The account flows naturally from one chapter to the next, so a change in referent would be very confusing; thus, it is unlikely that the Babylon of Revelation 17 is different than the Babylon of Revelation 18.

3. Rome²²

a) Support

- (1) "The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth" (Rev 17:18). Rome ruled the Roman Empire when John wrote this book.
- (2) Rome also was built upon seven hills (Rev 17:9).



b) Problems

- (1) While Rome was the most influential city when John wrote, this end-times Babylon is the most powerful entity during the Tribulation when the prophecy will be fulfilled.
- (2) The seven hills and kings relate to the *horns* on the beast (Rev 17:7-9), not to the *woman* who rides the beast (17:3). These two entities should remain distinct.

4. Jerusalem²³

a) Support

- (1) Jerusalem fits into God's prophetic program for the end times (cf. Zech. 14:1-5). The Tribulation period is called the "time of Jacob's wrath" (Jer. 30:7), indicating suffering for Jews and Israel.
- (2) The woman "sits on" (controls) seven heads (kings), which indicates power over Rome (17:9). Jerusalem's present control over Catholicism is evident in its jurisdiction over the many Roman Catholic churches throughout Israel.
- (3) Jerusalem has killed many of the saints and prophets of God (17:6).



²² Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 306-36. Arguing against Rome and in favor of Babylon, Iraq is Thomas, 289.


²³ J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 283-86.

b) Problems

- (1) While Jerusalem is prominent in prophecy, its worldwide influence occurs only in the millennium (Isa. 2) rather than the Tribulation period (which is the context for Rev 17–18).
- (2) Whereas the text indicates the woman controlling Rome, the opposite was true in John's day and our own. Also, though modern Israel controls the Catholic sites in her domain, she has little influence over Catholicism worldwide.

E. USA²⁴

1. Support (arguments from Chan Kai Lok)

- a) Babylon must be a nation since no single city reigns over the earth (17:18), and a "city" is a nation in biblical symbolism.
 - (1) The New Jerusalem is a city (22:14, 19) and a country/nation (Heb. 11:13-16).
 - (2) The New Jerusalem is a city (22:14, 19) but also the Bride of Christ (21:2, 10), the latter also being designated a nation (1 Pet. 2:9).
 - (3) Contrasts in the text abound between End Times Babylon (an unholy city/nation, Rev 17–18) and the New Jerusalem (a holy city/nation/Bride of Christ, Rev 21–22).
- b) The US is Symbolized by a Woman (17:1-7, 18).
 - (1) The key symbol of the US is the woman of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor.
 - (2) America is the birthplace of modern feminism that has swept the globe.
- c) The US is a Prostitute in the Spiritual Realm (17:1, 15-16; 19:2)—Since the biblical meaning of adultery is to forsake one's spiritual roots, the US qualifies well in this respect as it has abandoned its Christian heritage established by the Pilgrims.
 
- d) The US is a Great Trading Centre (18:12-13)—End Times Babylon will be known worldwide for its commerce.
 - (1) The US is the largest business and financial hub in the world.
 - (2) Wall Street is the largest stock market worldwide.
 - (3) The US is the key player within the World Trade Organization.
 - (4) US firms produce more goods overseas than any nation.
 - (5) American trade spans the two major oceans in every item imaginable: precious metals and jewels (18:12a), clothing fashions and luxury items (18:12b), wheat and meat production, along with other foods (18:13a), and "the bodies and souls of men" (human trade in prostitution, drug trafficking, and pornography, 18:13b).

²⁴ David Wilkerson, *Set the Trumpet to Thy Mouth* (Lindale, TX: World Challenge, 1985), 3; Chan Kai Lock, *Who is End Times Babylon?* (Singapore: by the author, 1992), 3.

- e) The US is Rich and Enriches Many Great Men (18:3, 14, 23).
- (1) No country or institution can match the wealth of the USA with its abundance of cars, food, goods, and multiplied luxuries.
 - (2) The US dollar is the standard trading currency on the globe.
 - (3) Former poor nations have grown rich through US investment (e.g., Singapore, China)—even previous enemies of the US (e.g., Japan, Germany).
- f) The US Controls Many Nations (17:1, 15).
- (1) America's global dominance increased dramatically with the fall of the USSR, leaving the US as the sole "Superpower" nation.
 - (2) Washington's voice in the UN is preeminent.
 - (3) Some nations cannot act without US approval (e.g., Israel).
 - (4) The world is increasingly embracing American democracy.
- g) The US Could Be Destroyed by Russia's Nukes (17:3).
- (1) Whether the scarlet beast is Russia²⁵, the G7 and EC, or some other entity, the US exercises more control over them all than does any other entity.
 - (2) In any case, the Beast will destroy the Woman in one hour (18:8, 17, 19) by fire (17:16; 18:8-9). Even the destruction of a city by conventional fire takes several days (e.g., The Great Chicago Fire, San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906), so consumption by fire in only one hour almost inevitably must mean nuclear warfare. Russia has the most significant capacity to inflict this type of damage.
- h) The US is Hedonistic, and Other Nations Copy Her (18:3, 5).
- (1) The US continually boasts that it is protecting American interests globally.
 - (2) Americans worship sex, material things, sports, entertainment, and pleasure—all of which are idols. The blatant idolatry of "American Idol" is mimicked worldwide.
 - (3) US-sponsored trends are copied worldwide (fast food, clothing, music, pornography, drugs, scientific breakthroughs, skateboards, etc.).
- i) The US is Glorified and Lives in Great Comfort (18:7).
- (1) What nation or institution has the world's admiration more than the US?
 - (2) Glory has been accrued to the US more than any nation in numerous areas: space technology, scientific discoveries, the most Nobel Prize winners, the most inventions, and the attraction of the best brains in the world.
 - (3) The US is obsessed with comfort. More Americans are overweight than any other country. Homes have all the latest conveniences at bargain prices. Even Christians readily admit that they "church shop" until "we find a place that is comfortable."

²⁵ Chan identifies the 7 heads of the USSR beast as the 7 Warsaw Pact nations (East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Russia) and the 10 horns as the 10 Soviet republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States, or CIS (p. 13). Such a specific designation can only be speculated though.

- j) The US is Occultic (17:5; 18:2-3).
- (1) The US association with ancient Babylon takes many forms.
 - (a) Babylonian mystery religion is duplicated in the Catholic church in mother and son worship, celibate priests, purgatory, celebration of Nimrod's birthday on December 25, etc.²⁶ This teaching has been marketed to the world from Catholic American missionaries and, in the case of Christmas, US concerns for business profits. Over 27% of Americans claim Catholicism.
 - (b) Babylonian occultism is the root of numerous US secret societies (e.g., Gnostics, Freemasons, Rosicrucians, Theosophists, Neo-Nazis, etc.).
 - (2) The end-times Babylon is "a home for demons and... every evil spirit" (18:2), and the US Bill of Rights safeguarding freedom of religion has enabled the country to have more cults than any nation (over 5000!).²⁷ Similarly, every major US city has a satanic church.
 - (3) Secular humanism is now the protected national religion, while prayer and anything Christian is outlawed in schools and many public arenas.
- k) The US is Immoral and Abominable
- (1) American immorality gives it the highest rates in the world for prostitution, rape, sex outside of marriage, divorce, abortion (over 70 million!), child abuse, drug use, and venereal disease.
 - (2) The US has the distinction as the world's most influential marketer of media filth (all protected by America's "free speech" law).
- l) The US Deceives All Nations with Her Sorcery (18:23)—The Greek (*pharmakeia*) for the "sorcery" (KJV) or "magic spell" (NIV) of end-times Babylon may refer to drug use ("enchantment with drugs"),²⁸ of which the US is the worst. This "sorcery, magic" (BDAG) may be drug-induced.

²⁶ See Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* (Riverside, CA: Woodrow Evan. Assoc., Inc., 1966, 1981); Frederick A. Tattford, *Five Minutes to Midnight* (London: Victory Press, 1980).

²⁷ Dave Hunt, *Peace, Prosperity and the Coming Holocaust* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1983).

²⁸ Robert Young, *Young's Analytical Concordance*.

- m) The US Sits as a Queen, is No Widow, and Sees No Sorrow (18:7).
- (1) Babylon's claim, "I am not a widow," affirms that her men have not died on battlefields.²⁹ Such was the case in recent wars the US has fought. During the Gulf War (January 17-February 28, 1991), General Norman Schwarzkopf so overwhelmed Saddam Hussein's forces that the ground war lasted only five days. The enemy lost about 1000 troops for each American soldier lost, and most of the latter were killed by friendly fire! The USA's overwhelming victory over the Taliban in Afghanistan was similar to the Iraq War that toppled Saddam Hussein.
 - (2) Babylon's claim, "I will never mourn (see no sorrow)," results from such war success. No army can better make this claim than the US Army.
 - (3) Given unequaled US military prowess, she sits as "queen" with increased credibility as the policeman and peacemaker of the world. In particular, US dominance over the Arab states and Russia is no longer questioned.
 - (4) Believing that the Cold War is over, the sale of many US bases by the Department of Defense has filled the coffers as well, just like a queen's.
- n) The US has Killed the Prophets and Saints of God (17:6; 18:24).
- (1) At first, this may not seem to be characteristic of the USA, which was founded upon freedom of conscience and has championed the cause of religious freedom worldwide. Tolerance of all viewpoints is the byword of the day.
 - (2) Yet end-time Babylon is also guilty "of all who have been killed on the earth" (18:24). Since no entity is guilty of every murder worldwide, this is an exaggeration for effect. What is meant is that Babylon is guilty of being a partaker of other people's sins in the sense that the Pharisees were partakers of the sins of their fathers against the prophets (Matt. 23:29-32; Luke 11:47-52).
 - (3) In this sense, the US is passively guilty of the blood of prophets and saints, for the US has abandoned its original commission of the Pilgrim days to witness for God. Instead, it approves of these sins in its midst: Satan worship, idolatry, drug trafficking, pornography, adultery, homosexuality, and the like.
 - (4) In another sense, the USA is *actively* guilty of killing many saints, for the wholesale slaughter of 70 million unborn in this generation alone has murdered millions who would have grown up to serve as God's witnesses around the globe. The other countries of the world have followed the US lead in the abortion holocaust, killing untold millions of God's children.

²⁹ NIV Study Bible notes on Rev 18:7.

2. Problems

- a) Although the woman of the Statue of Liberty is *one* symbol of America, it is not the primary one. The national symbol of the US is the bald eagle.
- b) Chan Kai Lok does not attempt to prove that Russia is the beast of Revelation 13:1-10; 17:3f. He appeals instead to Revelation See's book *The Antichrist is Now Here!* Though Chan's book appeared in 1992, he refers to the Antichrist as "USSR"—two full years after the breakup of the USSR in 1990.
- c) Chan has made numerous "prophetic" blunders. He predicted the economic collapse of the USA in 1992,³⁰ the return of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in 1992,³¹ and the nuclear destruction of the USA by Russia in 1993.³²
- d) Theological problems abound in the book. Dubious exegetical support is given to prove that the USA is the people of God or the "Joseph people" (descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh),³³ questionable theological teachings are based on the numbers 13 and 17,³⁴ adulterers are all deemed unsaved,³⁵ Maitreya is claimed to be the demon behind the Antichrist (other demons are also "identified"),³⁶ and the first three seals of Revelation 6 are incorrectly linked to events of 1990-1991.³⁷

Conclusion

No one can identify the Babylon of Revelation 17–18 with certainty. However, for the reasons cited in this study, it would seem that Babylon is neither a city (Rome, Jerusalem, or Babylon, Iraq) nor a confederation of nations (which confuses Babylon with the beast and its ten horns and seven heads).

While one cannot be certain, the most plausible identification is the most powerful and influential nation in the world: the United States of America. This study does not endorse Dr. Chan Kai Lok's sensationalistic features and date-setting errors. Nevertheless, comparing the characteristics of this end-time Babylon with America leaves no better option at the present time.

Of course, nothing excludes a more powerful entity than the US arising in the future, so one cannot be sure of the US as this entity. Until God reveals Babylon's identity without question, Christians should not be looking for Babylon but rather accomplishing the commission given to us by Jesus Christ to bring the gospel to the world.

³⁰ Chan, 107.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

³² Chan, 107-8, 134, prophesies a nuclear destruction and pages 137, 145 specify the year as 1993.

³³ *Ibid.*, 28, 60.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-39.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 80, 115-34.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 139-45.

Charles Ryrie on End Times Babylon

Charles C. Ryrie has his own summary of the nature of End Times Babylon:

The Characteristics of End Times Babylon.

Specific characteristics of Babylon of Revelation 17 are specified.

- (1) She is a harlot (v. 1). This means she is unfaithful. She professes to be a system of religious truth and is, in reality, one of falsehood. This is confirmed by the name she assumes—"End Times Babylon" (v. 5).
- (2) She is ecumenical (vv. 1,15). She sits upon many waters, which are explained as being "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."
- (3) She unites church and state under her sway (vv. 2-3). By granting her favors to the kings of the earth, she can dominate the beast (v. 3), who heads the western confederation of nations (vv. 12-13) and whose dominion coincides with that of the whore (13:7).
- (4) She is a "whited sepulcher" (v. 4). Outwardly, she has great grandeur, but inwardly, she is filled with filthiness.
- (5) She is a federation (v. 5). Her name is "The Mother of Harlots," which seems to indicate that she is a sort of mother church incorporating many equally false religious systems. Because of this designation, many understand that the apostate church will be meshed with the Roman Catholic system but not restricted to it.
- (6) She persecutes the saints (v. 6).
- (7) She is destroyed entirely by the beast (v. 16). This probably occurs in the middle of the tribulation period. It is described as a decisive and complete overthrow of the power of the apostate religious system (adapted from Charles C. Ryrie, "Apostasy in the Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121 [Jan-March 1964]: 51-52).

The ten-nation Roman confederacy receives power along with the beast or Antichrist (17:12), thus showing that they are different.

Outline continued from page 396...

- (c) Earth's remorse for Babylon's fall contrasts with heaven's rejoicing to show God's perspective and rejoice at the soon coming of Christ (18:9–19:10).
 - (i) The earth mourns over Babylon's fall because its businessmen can longer profit from the system's commercial enterprises (18:9-24).



- (ii) Heaven rejoices over Babylon's fall with the Church celebrating with Christ, anticipating his coming to set up a righteous kingdom (19:1-10).
 - a. Heaven rejoices over Babylon's fall since its destruction allows Christ to replace it with a righteous kingdom (19:1-6).

Heaven Rejoices (19:1-2 NLT)

After this, I heard what sounded like a vast crowd in heaven shouting,
"Praise the LORD!
תְּלִילִיָּהּ Salvation and glory and power
belong to our God.
His judgments are true and just.
He has punished the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth with her
immorality.
He has avenged the murder of his
servants."

- b. The Church's uniting with Christ in the marriage feast of the Lamb anticipates the imminent Second Coming of Christ (19:7-10).



The First Century Wedding Procession

**Groom's House
(at his Father's House)**

Bride's House

- The groom's procession parallels Christ's return for His Bride, the Church. At the Rapture, He will come to bring believers back to the Father's House.

Marriage & the Church Timeline

Election God the Father chose those to be saved (Eph. 1:5, 11)	Purchase Christ paid the Father His blood to redeem the church (1 Pet. 1:18)	Sign New covenant began with the cup of the Supper (Luke 22:20)	Our Job Holiness for Christ during church age (2 Cor. 11:2)	Christ's Job Preparing heaven for church until He returns (John 14:1-3)	Rapture Christ brings church to heaven at unexpected time w/ shout (1 Thess. 4:14-18)	Wedding Church cleansed & presented unspotted (rewarded) in heaven (Eph. 5:26)	Supper to Come Church unites with Christ & glorifies Him for imparting holiness (Rev. 19:7-9)	Second Coming & Supper Saints & Christ return to earth to reign (Rev. 19:11-20:6)
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Church Age
(Church & Christ) Separated

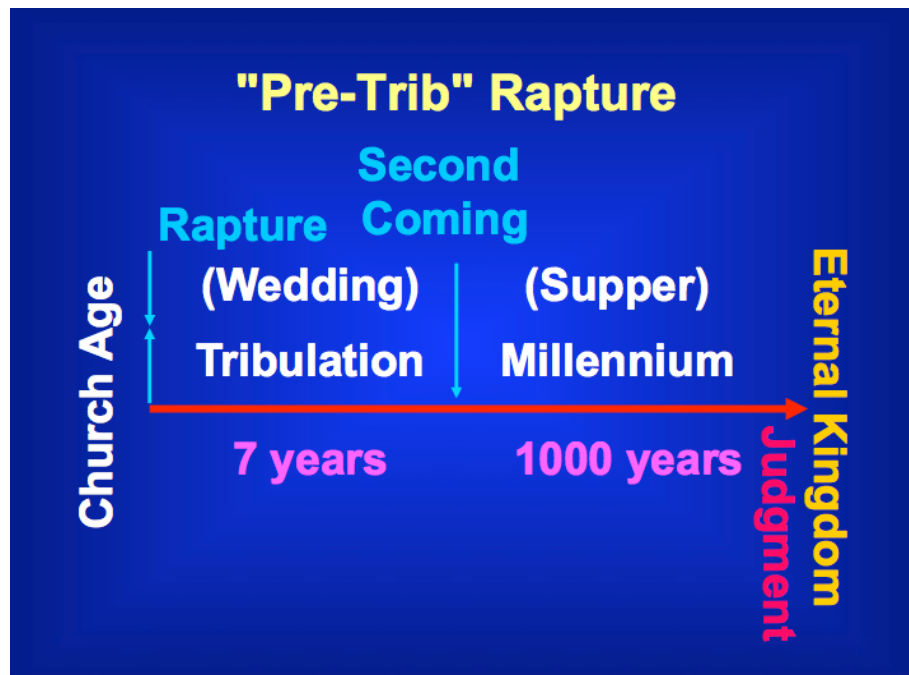
Tribulation

Millennium

Betrothal Period
(Bride & Groom Separated)

Choice <i>(Shiddukhin)</i> Father chooses a bride for his son (Tobit 4.12-13; Ecclesiast. 7.23; Sirach 7.25; Mishna Kiddushin 2.1)	Purchase <i>(Mohar)</i> Groom pays bride's father gold & silver or service as dowry (Tobit 8.21; Jub. 28.2)	Sign <i>(Ketubah)</i> Marriage covenant begins with contract & cup of betrothal (Tobit 7.14-15; Kidd. 2.2; Ketuboth 1.2)	Bride's Job <i>(Kedesbat)</i> Maintains virginity (set apart for groom) one year (Mishna Sotah 1.1, 5; 5.1; Sirach 42.10)	Groom's Job <i>(Huppah)</i> Prepares bridal chamber and place in home of his father (1 Macc. 3.56; 2 Enoch 61.2)	Procession <i>(Nissulm)</i> Groom's surprise arrival, calls bride & escorts her to his father's house (Adam & Eve 22.3; 4 Ezra 6.23)	Wedding <i>(Sheva Brachot = 7 Nuptial blessings)</i> bride washes, adorns, presented by groom as beautiful virgin (Tobit 7.13) & declared married	Wedding Supper Intercourse (Mishna Ketuboth 1.1; 3 Macc. 1.19; 4.6) began a 7-14 day feast (Tobit 8.19-20; 9.6); guests given white linen & groom praised for beauty given to the bride	Married Life Bride & groom live in society to serve God together (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6)
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10th ed. 14 Apr 2011



Contrasting the Marriage & Supper (Rev. 19)		
Symbols	Wedding	Feast
Verse	7	9
Tense	Aorist (past)	Present
Involvement	Church as Bride	Israel as Guests
Time Period	Tribulation	Millennium
Place	Heaven	Earth
Characteristics	Procession, Wedding	Friends invited to Wedding Feast
Explanation	Bride/Church brought to Father's house	Bride/Church introduced to friends/Israel
Scripture	Rom. 7:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:27	Isa. 25:6-8; Matt. 8:11; 26:29; Luke 12:35-37

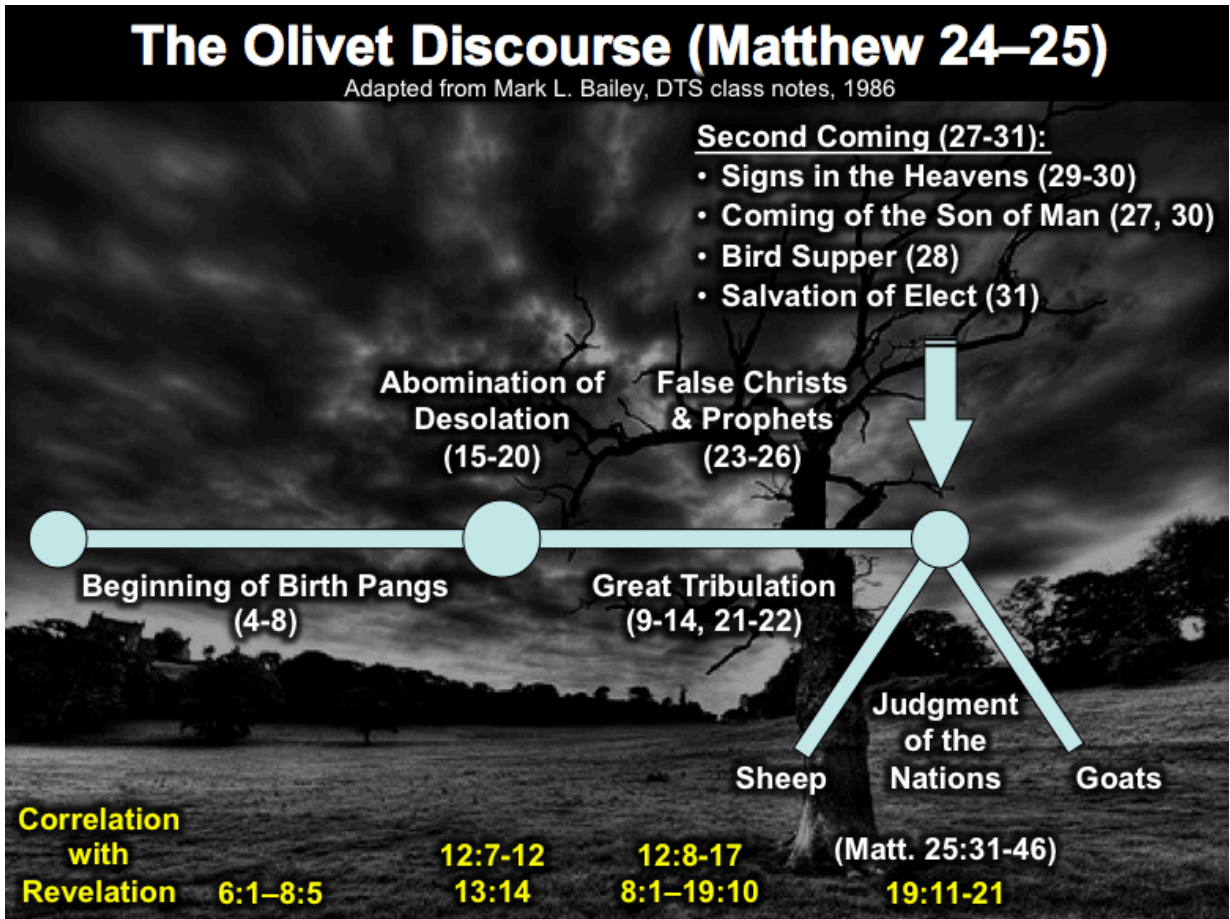
Outline continued from the end of major point "A" on page 415 that concluded with 19:10...

- B. Christ's Second Coming encourages believers under persecution that Christ will be Ultimate Victor (19:11-21).
 - 1. Christ will powerfully return with angels and saints as Sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords to right the wrongs of the Antichrist and False Prophet (19:11-16).



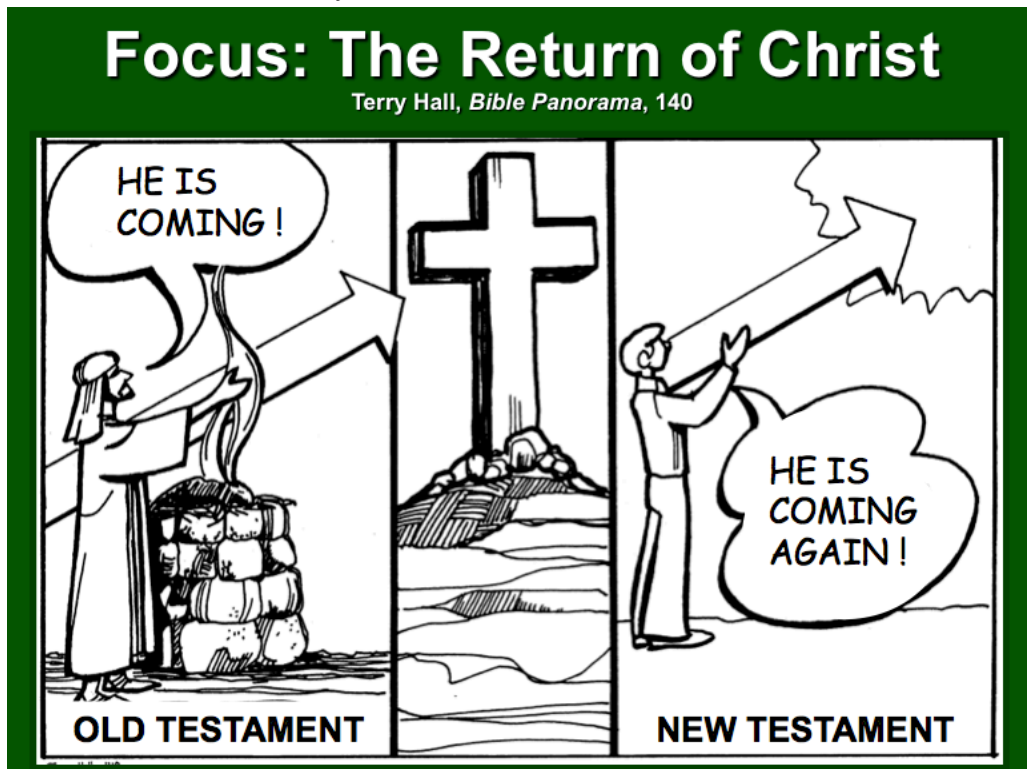
- 2. Christ will defeat the Antichrist, False Prophet, and their armies at the Battle of Armageddon as Ultimate Victor to encourage believers persecuted by them (19:17-21).







Focus: The Return of Christ

Terry Hall, *Bible Panorama*, 140



Christ's Two Comings

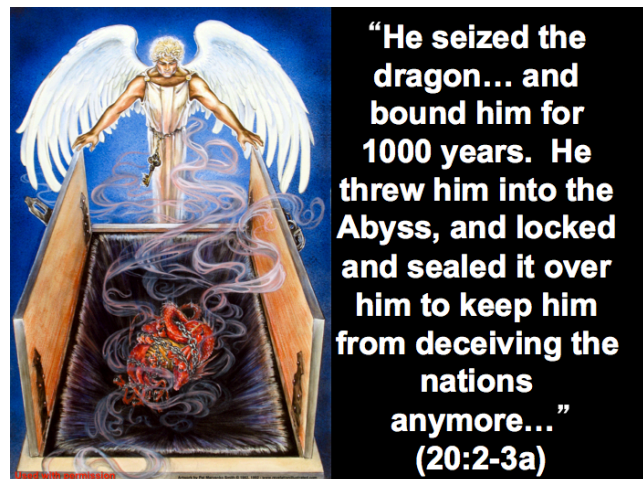
 FIRST COMING	(CHURCH AGE)	 SECOND COMING
Laid in a manger		Lands on a mountain
Came as a lamb		Comes as the Lord
Lowly and poor		Lavish and powerful
Died for His enemies		Death to His enemies
Tempted by Satan		Traps Satan in bottomless pit
Lived in a world of unrighteousness		Leads the world in righteousness
Died for sins and rose again		Directs and reigns

Ruth & Larry Moody; cited by Terry Hall, *Bible Panorama*, 117



Outline continued from major point "B" that began on page 417...

- C. The Millennium will show Christ's sovereignty as Ultimate Victor over the earth, Satan, and death itself (Rev 20).
 - 1. The Millennium will fulfill many OT prophecies with Satan bound and believers ruling with Christ on earth for 1000 years (20:1-6).
 - a) Satan will be bound the entire length of the Millennium to prevent him from deceiving the nations for the 1000 years that Christ rules (20:1-3).



(1) Does Satan deceive the nations now?

(a) Amillennialists say “no.”

- (i) “For who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man like Satan and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house” (Matt. 12:29)
- (ii) [Jesus told the seventy-two disciples], “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! ¹⁹Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you” (Luke 10:17-18)
- (iii) “The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out” (John 12:31).
- (iv) “In this way, [Christ] disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross” (Col. 2:15).

(b) Premillennialists say “yes.”

- (i) The above verses show that Satan was ultimately defeated at the cross. However, none of them say that he has stopped tempting people today—and succeeding in deceiving them!

c. Satan is on the loose: “Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).



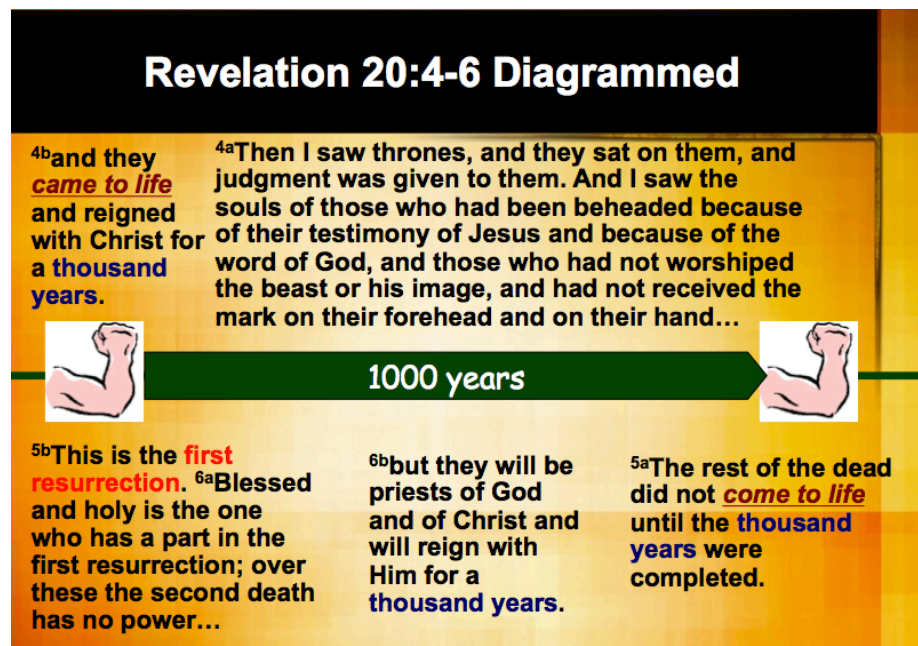
d. Others are succeeding over Satan: “Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are” (1 Pet. 5:9).

- (ii) “Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God” (2 Cor. 4:4).
- (iii) “These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴But I am not

surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14).

- (iv) You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3All of us used to live that way... (Eph. 2:2-3a).
- (v) Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants (2 Tim. 2:26).
- (vi) By the way, name a country now that Satan is NOT deceiving right now...

- b) Christians (including believing Israel) will reign with Christ on earth for 1000 years to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant and other kingdom promises (20:4-6).



Purposes of the Millennium (20:1-6)

Why must there be a 1000-year reign before the eternal state? Many reasons! Here are some:

- (1) Believers will judge angels (Rev 20:4a; cf. 1 Cor. 6:2-4).
- (2) Believers will rule the earth (Rev 20:4b) to restore the rule originally God gave man (Gen. 1:26) that was lost in the fall (2 Cor. 4:4; cf. p. 9g top).
- (3) God will restore the world to pre-Flood conditions with longevity of life prior to eternity when death is no more (Rev 21:4). Isaiah 65:20 says that death will still exist (among those with mortal bodies); however, those of us with glorified bodies will not be able to die and thus will live throughout the 1000 years.
- (4) Even without Satan tempting people, in the Millennium God will show the human heart corrupt so much that he will rebel against him and deserve judgment (Rev 20:7-10).
- (5) God will fulfill his promises in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3; cf. p. 9g middle) and its unfolding covenants:
 - (a) The *Land Covenant* will have Israel occupy its promised borders (Ezek 37:8-28; Ezek 47-48) with Jerusalem as the world's capital (Isa. 2:1-5).
 - (b) The *Davidic Covenant* will be fulfilled with Christ ruling over Israel and the world (Isa. 11) with the saints (Rev 5:10).
 - (c) The *New Covenant* will finally be fulfilled with a reunited, believing Israel with all who know the Lord (Jer. 31:31-34).

Does 1000 years mean 1000 years?

Amillennial (Beale)	Premillennial
There is consistent figurative use of numbers elsewhere in Revelation (p. 995).	<p>All of these are literal numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 churches (Rev 2-3) • 144,000 Jews (7:1) • 200 million soldiers (9:16) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42 months (11:2) • 1260 days (11:3) • 75 lb. hailstones (16:21) <p>"The twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel are literally twelve (21:12-14). The seven churches are in seven literal cities. Yet confirmation of a single number in Revelation as symbolic is impossible."³⁸</p>
The context has figures such as a chain, Abyss, dragon, serpent, locked, sealed, & beast.	The Abyss is a literal place (Luke 8:1) where demons are chained (2 Pet. 2:4) but can be unlocked (Rev 9:1-2), so why can't they be <i>actually restrained</i> there? Also, the designations at the left are literal <i>titles</i> for Satan and Antichrist.
The entire book has a predominantly figurative tone as in multiples of a thousand in the book (5:11; 7:4-9; 9:16; 14:1; 21:16; p. 973).	Each example cited are literal: "Thousands upon thousands" (5:11), the 144,000 (7:4-9; 14:1), 200 million troops (9:16), and the 12,000 stadia size of the new Jerusalem (21:16). None are figurative!
The OT contains figurative use of "1000" (p. 995).	"With the LORD, a day is as a thousand years" (Ps. 90:4) has a symbolic use of the word "day" but makes no sense unless "thousand" is understood literally.
Jews and early Christians used "1000" years as a figure for the eternal blessings of the redeemed (pp. 1018-21).	In actuality, the 6000-year idea of rabbis and early Christians assumed a <i>literal</i> 1000 years as a "Sabbath." It was the <i>amillennial Augustine</i> who taught that the "eighth" day signified eternity. ³⁹
The first "came to life" is a "spiritual resurrection" (20:4) but the second is a physical one (20:5).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why see the same verb <i>differently</i> in same text? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Came to life" <i>never denotes to a "spiritual resurrection"</i> in the Bible. • "Resurrection" always denotes <i>physical</i> bodies. • Believers are spiritually alive <i>now</i>, so no need!
The number "1000" is for the "fullness of time" and thus symbolizes an indefinite era as in Psalm 50:10 and 2 Peter 3:8.	<p>Psalm 50:10 ("For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills") has nothing to do with time!</p> <p>2 Peter 3:8 ("A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day") shows Beale reads it as a literal 1000 years!</p>

³⁸ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 408-9.

³⁹ Augustine, *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons* 259.2; *City of God* 20.7.

All scholars before AD 300 were premillennial:

- Clement of Rome
- Ignatius
- Papias
- *The Didache*
- *The Epistle of Barnabas*
- *The Shepherd of Hermas*
- Justin Martyr
- Melito of Sardis
- Theophilus of Antioch
- Apollinaris of Hierapolis
- Irenaeus
- Hippolytus
- Clement of Alexandria
- Tertullian
- Julius Africanus
- Cyprian
- Nepos
- Coracion
- Commodian
- Victorinus of Pettau
- Methodius
- Lactantius

After AD 300, the 1000 years began to be spiritualized by Augustine, Jerome, Theodoret and others. This non-literal view of the millennium lasted a literal millennium!

Views on Revelation 20:1-6

	Amillennial	Premillennial
Selected Advocates	Anthony Hoekema, Leon Morris, William Hendrikson, John Gilmore	Herman Hoyt, John Walvoord, George Ladd, Robert Mounce
Outline of Revelation	Progressive Parallelism	Futuristic
Revelation 19–20 Timeline	Non-chronological Millennium (Rev 20) precedes Christ's return (Rev 19)	Chronological Christ's return (Rev 19) precedes millennium (Rev 20)
1000 years (six times in 20:1-6)	Non-literal	Literal (but some covenant premils such as Ladd say it is not literal)
Identity of Binding Angel (20:1-2)	Christ since: (1) He holds the keys of hades (1:5, 18; 3:7), (2) "angel" need not mean "angel" (cf. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14), and (3) Dan. 12:1 says the Messiah is Michael the archangel (Gilmore, 375-77). But Morris, 137 disagrees.	An angel since: (1) Christ could have given an angel the key, (2) Christ is called "the angel of the Lord" (Gen. 22:16 with Heb. 6:13; Gen. 22:11, 12 with Heb. 12:25), and (3) and Dan. 12:1 does not equate Michael and Christ.
Binding of Satan (20:2-3)	Present: restricted from deceiving nations but can deceive individuals by being "denied full control" (Gilmore, 378; Matt. 12:29)	Future: he deceives both individuals and nations now; it is inconsistent to say he can deceive one and not the other (1 Pet. 5:8 says Satan is loose!)
Time of 20:4-6 rule	Present	Future (cf. Rev 5:10)
Place of 20:4-6 rule	Heaven	Earth (Rev 20:1; cf. 5:10)
"Came to life" (ἐζήσαν in 20:4a) and "first resurrection" (ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη in vv. 5b-6a)	Spiritual: Believer's <i>transition</i> from physical death to life in heaven with Christ <i>without</i> a resurrected body (Hoekema, 171): (1) this is the only time in the NT ἀνάστασις means other than a physical resurrection, (2) the root of ἐζήσαν (ζάω) means being alive (3:1; 4:9, 10; 7:2; 15:7)	Physical: Believer's bodily <i>resurrection</i> as: (1) this is the normal use of the terms, (2) the resurrections <i>precede</i> the 1000 years, (3) all are resurrected together, not individually, and (4) arguing from a root is fallacious and provides no real parallel passages
"Came to life" (ἐζήσαν in 20:5)	A different meaning (physical resurrection here) than meant by the same phrase in verse 4 (spiritual there)	A consistent meaning of physical resurrection in both verses (which matches the physical meaning of the same Greek verb in 2:8)
Nature of the implied second resurrection	Believer's bodily resurrection (20:4-5)	Unbeliever's resurrection (20:12-13)
Number of Physical Resurrections (20:4-6, 12-13)	One general resurrection	Several resurrections—4 groups in 3 time periods (cf. class notes, 160 but Ladd says 2 time periods)
Persons Judged at the Great White Throne (20:11-15)	All people	Unbelievers only (though another resurrection of believers from the millennium is also possible)

Questions on Revelation 20:1-6

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ²He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

⁴I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

⁵(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years (NIV).

Where do the saints rule (20:4)?

Amils often say in heaven

But Revelation says it is on earth

- "And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign *on the earth*" (5:10).
- *No change of location* is noted from Rev 20:3 (on earth) to verse 4, so we should assume verses 4-6 also to be on earth.

When do the saints rule (20:4)?

Amils claim it is now

But Revelation says it is future

- "And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they *will* reign on the earth" (5:10).
- "...they *will* be priests of God and of Christ and *will* reign with Him for a thousand years" (20:6).

The First Resurrection (20:4)

Revelation 20:4-6 mentions two resurrections—the “first resurrection” before the 1000 years that enables the saints to reign (vv. 4, 6) and another resurrection of the “rest of the dead” after the 1000 years (v. 5). The *timing* of these two resurrections is different (before and after the 1000 years), but is the *nature* of them different too? In other words, are these both *physical* resurrections? Or is there even any *other* type of resurrection besides a physical one?

Beale (amil) refuses to equate the two resurrections with "came to life" (ἐζήσαν) at the "first resurrection."

Beale says that "came to life" (from ζῶω, "to live") can have three different meanings:

- Physical resurrection (1:18; 2:8)
 - ^{NLT} Revelation 1:18 I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.
 - ^{NLT} Revelation 2:8 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive."
- Physical existence (16:3; 19:20)
 - ^{NAU} Revelation 16:3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea... and every living thing in the sea died.
 - ^{NLT} Revelation 19:20b ... Both the beast and his false prophet were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.
- Spiritual existence (3:1; 7:17; 13:14)
 - ^{NLT} Revelation 3:1 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Sardis... "I know... that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead."
 - ^{NAU} Revelation 7:17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will... guide them to springs of the water of life..."

If both “came to life” designations are physical, then this advocates *two* resurrections. Beale sees the problem here as this contradicts the amillennial system that teaches only *one general resurrection* after the millennium (viewed as the present age). Therefore, this third (spiritual) meaning is the one Beale, 1004, applies to the “first resurrection” but not to the second one.

So which of these three nuances is best in 20:4? And how can we tell?

1. "Resurrection" (ἀνάστασις) in the NT only means physical, bodily life into a glorified body:

^{NLT} John 11:25 Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying.

^{NIV} 1 Cor. 15:12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

The same physical resurrection nuance is in 1 Cor. 15:13, 21, 42

2. Physical resurrection is also the clear meaning of the same word "resurrection" (ἀνάστασις) in verse 5.

Would it *not* make sense to interpret the same *word* the same *way* in consecutive verses, especially since "resurrection" by definition refers to physical life?

3. However, Beale and other amillennialists view the passage inconsistently where...
 - a. "came to life" (ἐζήσαν) in verse 4 as "spiritual"
 - b. "come to life" (ἐζήσαν) verse 5 as "physical" resurrection

Beale, 1004-5 defends his inconsistent use of "resurrection" (ἀνάστασις) in verses 4-5:

"Elsewhere in the NT ἀνάστασις and ζάω (or the cognate noun ζωή, 'life') and synonyms are used interchangeably of both spiritual and physical resurrection *within the same immediate contexts*." For example...

^{NIV} Romans 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Rebuttals:

1. Is this "both spiritual and physical resurrection"?

No. Only the "raised" is a resurrection. To "live a new life" is not deemed a resurrection.

2. Are "resurrection" and "life" synonyms here, as Beale claims?

No. But Christ's physical resurrection gives spiritual life.

Beale, 1005 again defends his inconsistent interpretation of "resurrection" (ἀνάστασις) in verses 4-5:

The "first death of believers... is physical and different in nature from the second death of unbelievers, which is spiritual."

^{NIV} Rev 20:4b They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Rebuttals:

1. Is "came to life" = "the first death of believers"?

No. Coming to life does not refer to dying!

2. Are "first death" and "second death" in time (20:14)?

Of course, as 1000 years separates them!

3. Are these "two deaths" therefore "different in nature"?

No. There *is* no "first death"—only a "first resurrection"!

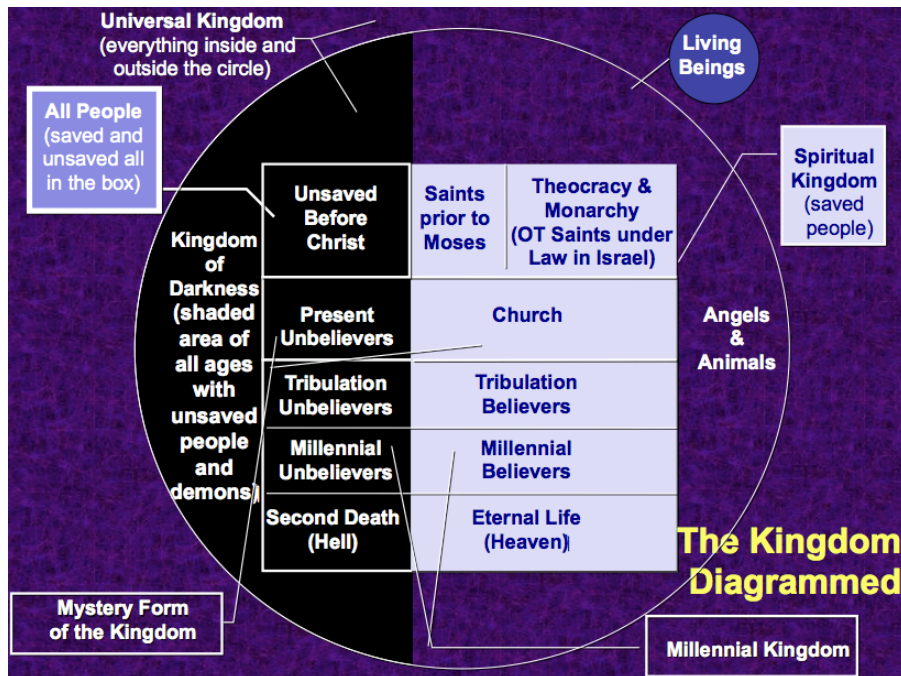
Is There a Future for Ethnic Believing Israel?

The question of a future for Israel may seem like an irrelevant issue for those obsessed with theological trivia. However, this question relates intricately with who Israel really is today (her identity) and one's answer here will determine the meaning of literally hundreds of verses in the Bible. The answer falls basically into three distinct camps or viewpoints, as seen in the circle chart at the right.



The Kingdom Diagrammed

The word "kingdom" is used in a different sense in various texts of Scripture:



Aspect of the Kingdom

- Universal Kingdom
- Spiritual Kingdom
- Kingdom of Darkness
- Unsaved Before Christ
- Sants Before Moses
- Theocratic Kingdom
- Mystery Form
- Church
- Present Unbelievers
- Millennium
- Tribulation Unbelievers
- Tribulation Believers
- Millennial Unbelievers
- Millennial Believers
- Second Death
- Eternal Kingdom

Description

- All creation of every age
- All saved of every age (white above)
- All unsaved of every age (dark above)
- Unbelievers prior to Christ's death
- Those with faith in God (e.g., Noah)
- God's rule over Israel as mediators
- Saved between Pentecost & Rapture
- Unbelievers in Church Age
- All people of the Millennium
- Unsaved of the Tribulation
- Saved of the Tribulation
- Unsaved of the Millennium
- Saved of the Millennium
- Unbelievers in Hell
- Spiritual Kingdom in new creation

Scripture

- Ps. 145:13; 1 Chron. 29:12
- Heb. 12:22-24; Col. 1:13b
- Col. 1:13a
- Gal. 3:21-22
- Gen. 6:9; 15:6 (Abraham)
- Exod. 19:6
- Matt. 13:24-30, 47-50
- Matt. 13:38
- 2 Cor. 2:15
- Isa. 65:20
- Rev 16:10
- Rev 20:4
- Rev 20:7-10
- Zech. 8:23
- Rev 20:14
- Dan. 2:44; Rev 21-22

Views on the Millennium

Definitions

1. The word "millennium" means "a period of a thousand years" (Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary), stemming from the Latin *mille*, "thousand" and *annus*, "year."
2. Although the word "millennium" itself is not in the Bible, the term refers to the thousand year reign of Christ found six times in Revelation 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. According to premillennialists it refers to the 1,000 year earthly reign of Christ in fulfillment of the Abrahamic (Gen. 12), Land (Deut. 30), Davidic (2 Sam. 7), and New (Jer. 31) Covenants.
3. The Millennium is also called "Your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10) and "the kingdom of God (Luke 19:11), the kingdom of Christ (Rev 11:15), the regeneration (Matt. 19:28), the times of refreshing (Acts 3:19), and the world to come (Heb. 2:5)" (Ryrie, Synopsis, 1953). The "Sabbath rest" (Heb. 4:9) also likely refers to the Millennium.

Major Questions Addressed in the Millennial Views

1. The millennial question generally concerns when Christ will come in relation to this millennium. Will he return before or after the millennium?
2. Also, "the millennial question asks what kind of Millennium there will be. That there will be a Millennium is a fact clearly taught in Revelation 20:1-6, but what *kind of* Millennium that will be is and has been strongly debated through the years" (Charles C. Ryrie, *What You should Know About the Rapture*, 10, emphasis mine).

Major Questions Answered by the Millennial Views

<u>View</u>	<u>Time</u> <i>When is the Millennium? Before/after Christ's Return? How long is it?</i>	<u>Nature</u> <i>What kind of Millennium?</i>
1. Amillennialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 1st & 2nd advents • Before the Second Coming • Indefinite length 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual kingdom of Christ • The present age itself • No future for national Israel
2. Postmillennialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Specific Beginning Point • Before the Second Coming • Indefinite length (but a few say it is a <i>literal</i> 1000 years, such as Boettner & Chilton) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literal rule of the Church on earth without Christ present • Similar to the present age (sin, marriage, birth & death present but greatly reduced) • No future for national Israel
3. Premillennialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future • After the Second Coming • Literal 1000 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literal rule of Christ on earth • Similar to postmil except Jewish elements, topographical changes, etc. • Future for national Israel

Diagrams of the Millennium

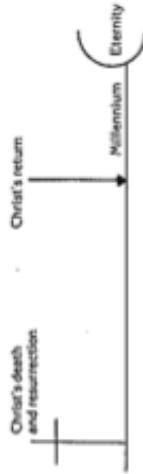
Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About the Rapture* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 10-11

What Is the Question?

of Christ. Diagrammed, they look like this.

Views of the Time of Christ's Return

Premillennialism



Postmillennialism



Amillennialism



What You Should Know About the Rapture

popular presentations of prophetic truths have to interact with what is being said. Those who believe the Bible are engaging in debates over various aspects of prophecy.

Two of the most important areas of discussion are the millennial question and the rapture question.

THE MILLENNIAL QUESTION

The millennial question asks what kind of Millennium there will be. That there will be some kind of Millennium is a fact clearly taught in Revelation 20:1-6, but what kind of Millennium that will be is and has been strongly debated through the years. Early Christians expected the speedy return of Christ to establish an actual kingdom on this earth, over which He would reign for a thousand years.

When Christ did not return, the church's concept of the Millennium changed to a nonliteral one (amillennialism). Augustine (354-430) taught people to look for the Millennium, wholly spiritual in character, in the Christian dispensation. During the Middle Ages and the Reformation periods, the idea of an actual kingdom was not taught by mainline groups, some of whom considered such teaching heretical. In the seventeenth century a new millennial teaching, postmillennialism, appeared, affirming that before the return of Christ there would be a worldwide experience of peace and righteousness due to the efforts of the church.

Since then there has been a revival of premillennialism, a continuation of amillennialism, and, most recently, a resurgence of postmillennialism.

These viewpoints—pre-, post-, and amillennialism—concern the relation of the coming of Christ to the Millennium, or thousand-year reign



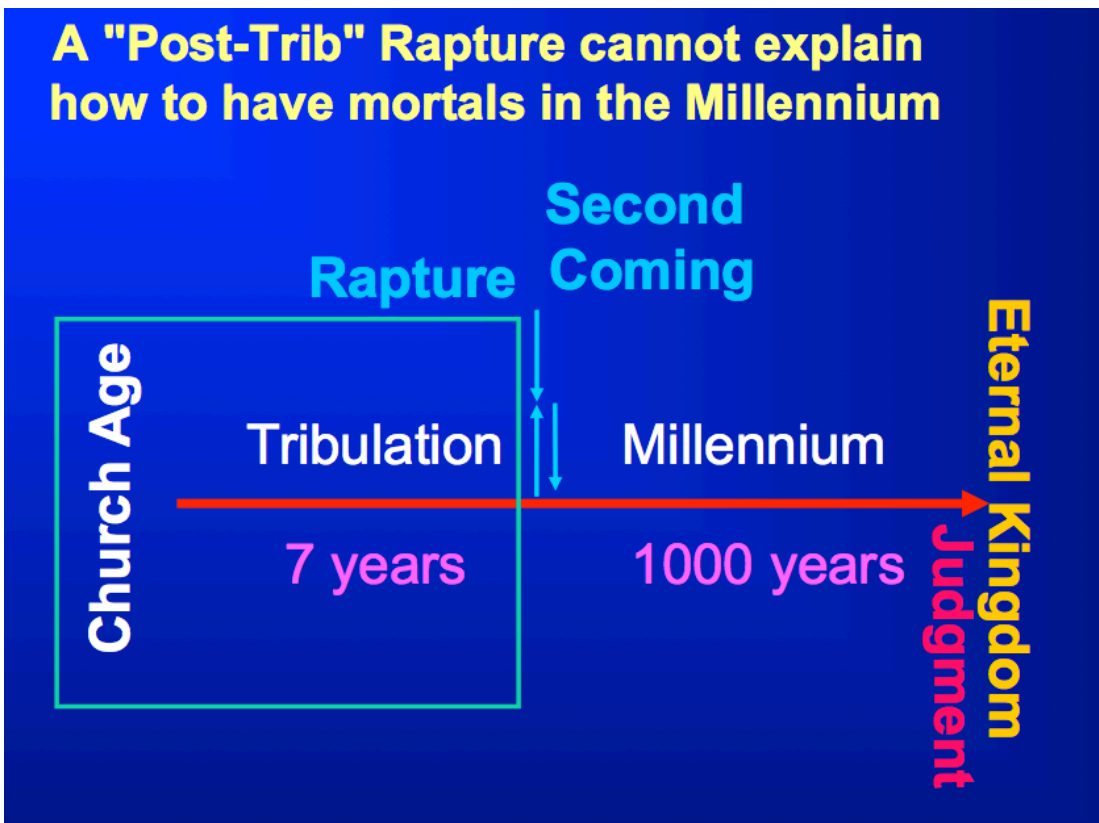
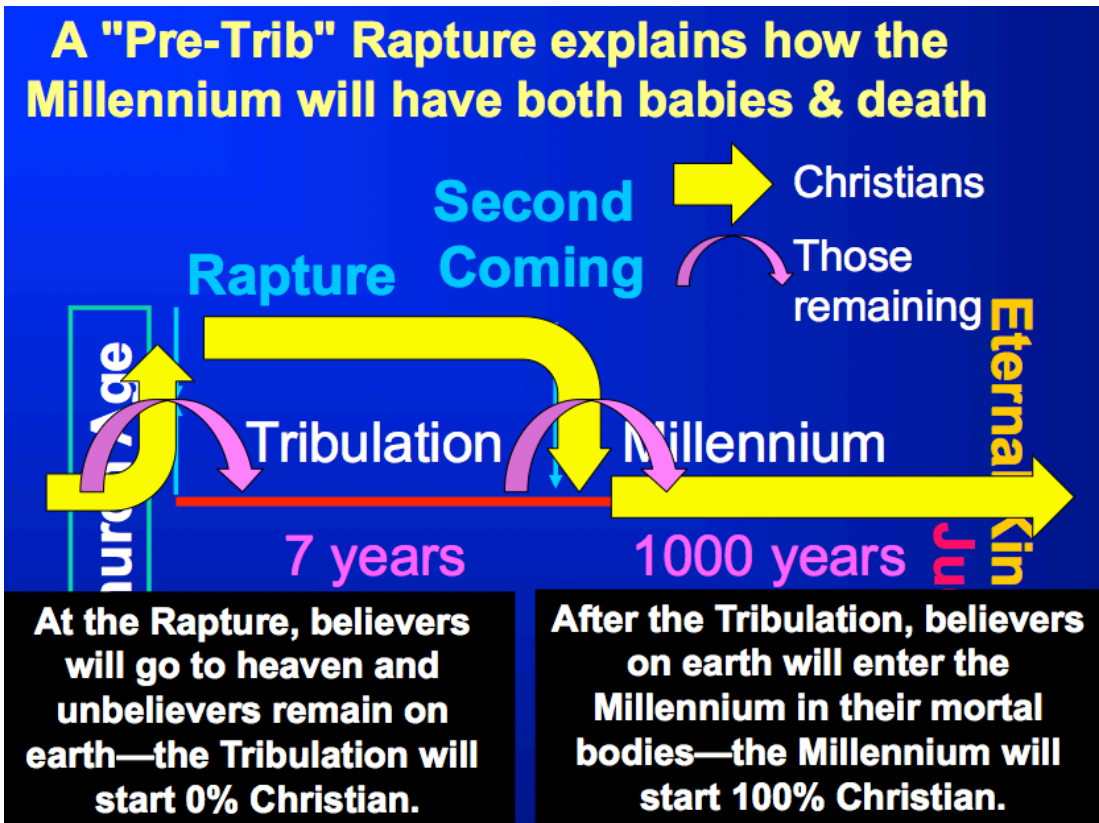
Revelation 20:1-6 Chronology

- Satan bound 1000 years (1-3)
- Saints come to life = first resurrection (4b, 5b)
- Saints reign 1000 years (4a, 4c, 6b)
- Second resurrection (5, 13)

Why am I Premillennial?

- The best hermeneutic is a normal, literal, historical, and grammatical text reading.
- Rev 19 (Christ's return) is before Rev 20 (Christ's rule)
- It is the most natural way to see the 1000 years (20:1-6)
- OT prophets saw a future time that is neither the present age nor heaven:
 - Animal kingdom tamed (Isa. 11:6-9)
 - Long life but still death (Isa. 65:20)
 - Yearly observances after Messiah's return (Zech. 14:15-17)

Millennium Mortals



Continued point "C" that began on page 421...

2. Satan's torment in the lake of burning sulfur after his defeat by Christ at the Battle with Gog and Magog will show Christ's victory over his long-time enemy (20:7-10).



Reasons Ezekiel's Gog & Magog is different from John's Gog & Magog in Revelation 20:7-10

Ezekiel 38:2
Gog = Prince
Magog = Land

Revelation 20:8
Gog & Magog = nations

Ezekiel 38:16
Gog against Israel

Revelation 20:8
Gog & Magog v. Messiah

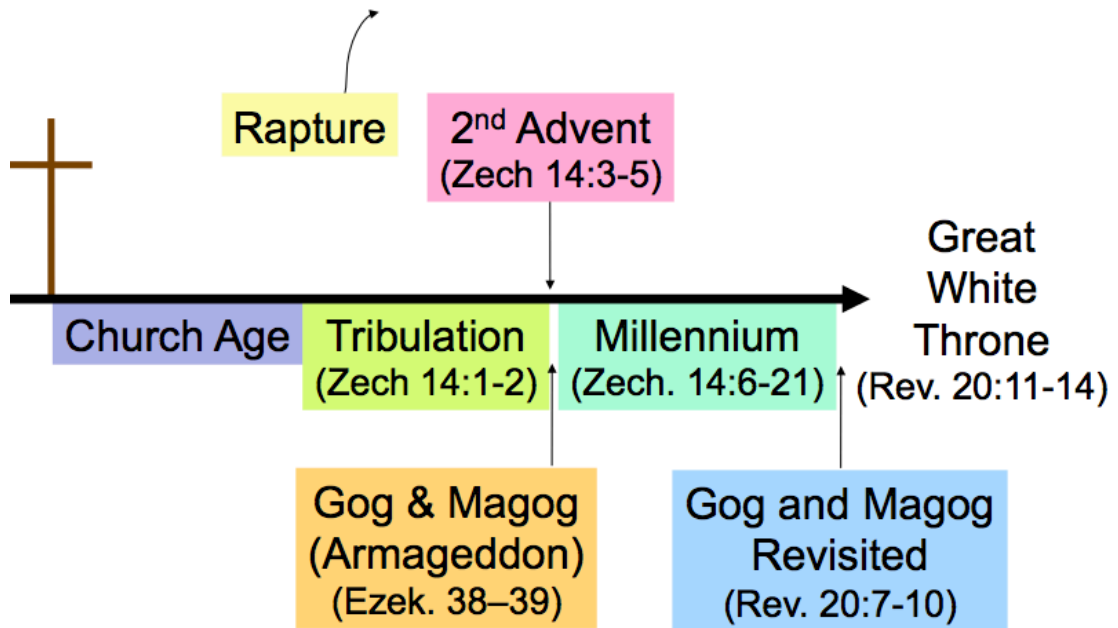
Ezekiel 39:17-20
Great feast of corpses

Revelation 20:10
Satan cast into lake of fire

Ezekiel 38-39; Rev. 9:16;
16:16; 19:19
Events fit before restored
millennial temple (Ezek. 40)

Revelation 20:7-10
Events fit after millennium in
20:1-6

A Dispensational Timeline



3. The Great White Throne Judgment shows God's just vengeance on all who opposed him and his victory over the last enemy, death (20:11-15).



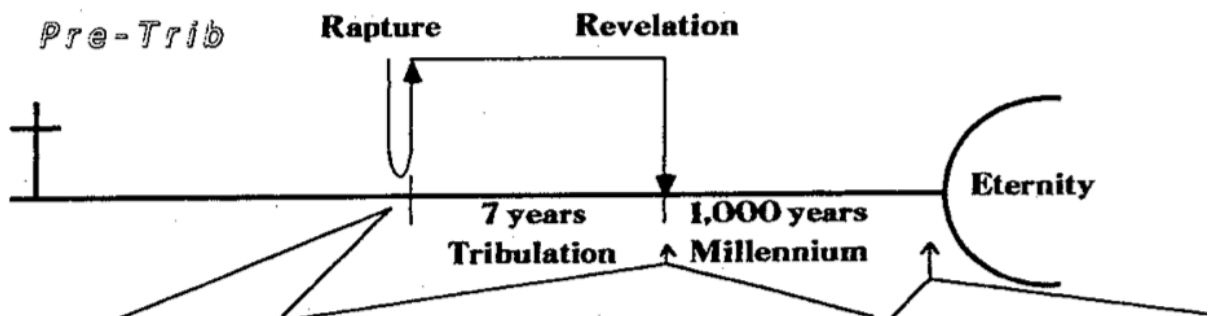
**"Then I saw a
great white
throne..."
(20:11)**

Resurrections & Judgments in Revelation 20

I. Introduction

- A. Amillennarians teach from John 5:28-29 one resurrection of the saved and lost, but the Bible records at least *four* resurrected groups in three separate periods (see below).
- B. It is inaccurate to speak of a single judgment day as Scripture records *seven* judgments.
- C. Multiple judgments should not sound strange to our ears as there has already been multiple judgments in the past: Lucifer and angels (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6), Flood (Gen. 6-7), Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), Northern nation of Israel (2 Kings 17:1-6), Judah (2 Kings 25:1-12), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), and even the present (Rom. 1:18).
- D. Past judgments only applied to *some* people, but future judgments will apply to *all* people who have ever lived (Heb. 9:27). The general guide for severity of punishment will be the greater the knowledge of the truth, the greater the judgment (Matt. 11:24; Luke 12:48).

II. Chart of Resurrections and Judgments



Time	Rapture	Second Coming at End of the Tribulation			End of Millennium		
Resurrection	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Judgment	Judgment Seat of Christ	Old Test. Saints	Tribulation Saints	Nation of Israel	Nations (Gentiles)	Satan and Fallen Angels	Great White Throne
Persons	Believers of church age	Believers of OT times	Martyred Tribulation Believers	Jews who survive the Tribulation	Gentiles who survive the Tribulation	Satan and demons	Unbelievers of all times (except the Tribulation) + Millennium mortals
Place	<i>Bema</i> of Christ (heaven)	Earth?	Earth?	Wilderness (Ezek 20:35)	Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:1-2)	Angelic sphere?	Great White Throne in Heaven
Basis	Works and walk of the Christian life	Faith in God	Faith in Christ	Faith in Christ shown in works (Mal. 3:2-3)	Faith in Christ shown in treatment of Israel (Matt. 25:40, 45)	Satan's fall (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek 28:12-19); demons follow Satan	Rejection of God's general revelation and/or special revelation in Christ
Results	Rewards or loss of rewards	Rewards	Reign with Christ in the Millennium	Believers to kingdom; rebels sent to Hades	Believers to kingdom; rebels sent to Hades	Lake of Fire (hell)	Lake of Fire (hell)
Scripture	1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:20-54	Dan. 12:1-3	Rev 20:4-6	Ezek 20:34-38; Matt. 25:1-30; Zech. 14:4	Joel 3:1-2; Isa. 34:1-2; Matt. 25:31-46	Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 20:10	Rev 20:11-15

Questions on Resurrections and Judgments

Question 1: Daniel 12:2 says, “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (NIV). Daniel 12:1 places the resurrections when believing Israel is delivered at the end of the tribulation period. However, a resurrection of the lost provides them immortal bodies 1000 years before their ultimate end in the lake of fire (Rev 20:14-15). The preceding chart shows Daniel 12:2 relating to Old Testament saints, but doesn’t it relate to *all* who are *saved* and *unsaved*? And how could the unrighteous rise at this point since Revelation 20:5 clearly states that they would not be raised until after the 1000-year period?

Answer: This text is not as problematic as it may at first appear:

1. Technically, this verse teaches only that both groups will be raised after the tribulation. It does not exclude a time period in between the two resurrections. In fact, this would not be unusual as OT prophets often include events together that we see now as separated by large time periods (e.g., Isa. 61:1-2).
2. The best reconciliation of the problem lies in questioning whether the above translation is correct. “Actually the Hebrew seems to separate sharply between the two classes of resurrection. Tregelles, following earlier Jewish commentators, translated verse 2, ‘And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; these shall be unto everlasting life; but... the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time, shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt.’ Robert Culver defends this translation by finding support in commentaries by Seiss and Nathaniel West” (Walvoord, *Daniel*, 287-88).
3. Note that the text says “many” who sleep rather than “all.” This is deliberate and thus does not indicate a general resurrection of all people but only of believing Jews. Some Amillennarians suggest that “many” really means “all,” and this is true in some parallel passages (Leupold cites Matt. 20:28; 26:28; Rom. 5:15, 16). But other amillennial scholars disagree, taking the text in its more natural sense (e.g., Young, Beven).
4. The passage goes on to record the nature of the righteous’ reward (v. 3) but says nothing of the punishment of the wicked. While this does not *prove* that both groups are not raised at this point, it nonetheless supports the concept that the righteous are raised here while the wicked are raised at a later point. Revelation 20:14-15 shows this later time to be 1000 years later.

Question 2: Why do so many premillennialists insist that believers will not appear at the great white throne judgment (Rev 20:11-15)? Many point out that Christians are not mentioned here, but this argument from silence seems weak.

Answer: I agree. I do not feel it is necessary to exclude all believers. What about those who will be born in mortal bodies during the millennium and then come to faith in Christ? Surely they must also appear for judgment to receive glorified bodies for eternity. While such persons could not technically be called members of the Church (since this exists only from Pentecost to the Rapture), they still must be judged to determine the extent of their rewards (not for salvation). A separate judgment of rewards for them is not mentioned in Scripture, but logically must occur for them.

Traditional versus Biblical Views of Hell

Traditions on Hell	The Bible on Hell
Man dwells with the devil	Man is alone (Luke 13:28)
“At least my friends will be there”	Yes, but you won’t see any of them (Luke 13:28)
Bodies will suffer mild discomfort	Bodies will suffer from burning sulfur and consumption by worms (Mark 9:47-48; Rev 21:8)
Satan is tormenter over all inn Hell	Satan in torment with those tormented (Rev 20:10)
A place of solid earth	A lake of suffering (Rev 20:10)
People alone suffer there	Demons as well as people suffer (2 Pet. 2:4)
Satan rules with a pitchfork	Satan thrown into Hell without any emblems of dominion (Rev 20:10)
Many now there	No one has gone to Hell yet

Differences Between the Millennium and Heaven

	Millennium	Heaven
Duration	1000 years (Rev 20:1-6)	Eternal (Rev 22:5)
Death	Possible (Isa. 65:20)	Impossible (Rev 21:4)
Longevity of Life	“Never again will there be an infant who lives a few days. He who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth” (Isa. 65:20)	No aging (Rev 21:4 implied)
Sin Nature	Active (Rev 20:7-9)	Abolished (Rev 21:27)
Inhabitants	Initially Christian, but later includes unbelievers –no living with angels? (Matt. 25:34; Rev 20:7-9)	Saints and angels alone (Rev 21:27)
Bodies	Mortal and immortal living together (Isa. 65:20; 1 Cor. 15:42-44)	Only immortal (glorified) (1 Cor. 15:42-44)
Satan	Bound, but then released after 1000 years (Rev 20:3, 7)	In lake of burning sulfur, never to be released again (Rev 20:10)
Political & Religious Centre	Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2, 7)	New Jerusalem (Rev 21)
Place	Earth (Rev 5:10)	New heavens and new earth (Rev 21:1)
Key Passages	Psalms 72; Isaiah 2; 11; 65–66; Revelation 20:1-6	Revelation 21–22

Outline continued from major point "C" on page 421...

- D. Prophecies of the Eternal State show the wonderful future of victors with Christ because he defeats the forces of evil (21:1–22:6).
 - 1. The new heaven and earth without continents separating men by sea are created since the first heaven and earth had passed away (21:1).
 - 2. The new Jerusalem describes the absence of all unpleasant circumstances experienced on earth as man again has complete fellowship with God (21:2-8).
 - 3. The new Jerusalem is cubed city 1500 miles (2500 kilometers) each way with jeweled walls and twelve pearl gates lit by God's presence and the tree of life (21:9–22:6).

The Bible's Major Theme: The Kingdom of God

The Bible has many themes: redemption, the glory of God, covenants, the sovereignty of God, worship, promise, etc.

But is there one theme that is more prominent than any other? I think there is one. This is the kingdom of God.

1. **Proponents:** Kenneth L. Barker, "The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, 305; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987); J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Wheaton: SP Pub., 1990), 9; Roy B. Zuck, ed., *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), ix; Klein, *EvTh* 30 (1970): 642-70; H. Schultz, *OT Theology* (Edinburgh, 1892), 1:56.

Others advocate a modified kingdom theme. Seebass (1965) says the theme is the rule of God; Georg Fohrer, *ThZ* 24 (1965), 161 advocates "the rule of God and the communion between God and man"; and R. Schnackenburg, *NT Theology Today* (New York, 1965) says the key biblical theme is a dual kingdom-covenant idea. I agree with Schnackenburg that the dual kingdom-covenant is the central focus of the OT—and of the entire Bible too.

2. **Statement:** "I am in essential agreement with the authors' stated center of biblical theology—basically the kingdom principle of Genesis 1:26-28. Most statements of a theological center are too limited (e.g., promise or covenant), too broad (God), or too man-centered (e.g., redemption or salvation-history). It seems clear that, although there are several great theological themes in Scripture, the central focus of biblical theology is the rule of God, the kingdom of God, or the interlocking concepts of kingdom and covenant (but not covenant alone). This theocratic kingdom is realized and consummated primarily through the mediatorial work of God's (and David's) messianic Son. Significantly, Ephesians 1:9-10 appears to indicate that God's ultimate purpose in creation was to establish His Son—the 'Christ'—as the supreme Ruler of the universe" (Kenneth L. Barker in Zuck, ed., ix).

This is similar to the sovereignty view, yet more complete in that it shows *how* God delegates some rule to man in various ages until he gives ultimate rule to his Son (Ps. 2).

3. The Kingdom in Genesis 1
 - Uncreated God (1:1)
 - Creation by Word alone (1:4)
 - Creation with ease
 - Sun and moon [gods] created (1:16)
 - Shared rule with man (1:26)

4. My View of the Bible's Theme

The Bible narrates

God's restoring man to participate in his kingdom rule for his own glory

mandated in Eden but lost in the Fall

and accomplished by redeeming man

through Israel's role as a kingdom of priests,

through the Church proclaiming Christ,

and ultimately through the Messiah,

who will reign as Savior and King

in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant

5. Key Texts: Gen. 1:26-28; 12:1-3; Exod. 19:5-6; Eph. 1:9-10; Rev 22:5

	Gen. 1:26-28	Gen. 12:1-3	Exod. 19:5-6	Eph. 1:9-10	Rev 22:5
Event	Creation Mandate	Abrahamic Covenant	Mosaic Covenant	Messianic Kingdom Rule	Saint's Rule
Mediator or Co-Ruler with God	Man (Adam)	Abraham	Israel	Jesus Christ	Believers
Subordinates (what is ruled over)	All creation except people (animals & nature)	All peoples	All peoples	All creation (people, animals & all nature)	All creation (animals & all nature)
Passage	<p>"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them <u>rule</u> over the fish ... birds ... livestock ... all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground...' God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and <u>subdue</u> it. <u>Rule</u> over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"</p>	<p>"...I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and <u>all peoples on earth will be blessed</u> through you."</p>	<p>"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a <u>kingdom of priests</u> and a holy nation."</p>	<p>"And he made known to us the mystery according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment –to bring <i>all things</i> in heaven and on earth together under <u>one head</u>, even Christ."</p> <p>Note that "all things" includes both animals (Isa. 11:6-9) and nature (Matt. 17:27; Mark 4:36-41; 6:45-51; 11:2)</p>	<p>"And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And <u>they will reign forever and ever</u>"</p>

The Bible's Chiasm

Repeated Patterns in Reverse Order

Christ's Rule

Christ's Redemption

Man's Rule Lost at Fall

Man's Rule Restored at Millennium

Creation

New Creation



The New Heavens & New Earth

A. **Terminology:** The Bible uses the term “heaven(s)” in at least four ways:

1. *Atmosphere:* The first “heavens” is the sky immediately above us (Gen. 1:6-8).
2. *Outer Space:* The second “heavens” contains the sun, moon, and stars (Gen. 1:1, 14).
3. *Abode of God and Saints:* Paul called this place the “third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2) that he equated with paradise (v. 4). We will study this place in this section.
4. *Millennium:* This 1000-year period is sometimes called the “new heavens and new earth” (Isa. 65:17; 66:22) and the “kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 22:2; 25:1).

- B. **New Heavens & New Earth:** We often refer to the eternal state of the redeemed as simply “heaven.” However, the scriptural term for our eternal home is the “new heaven and new earth” (Rev 21:1). Some questions concerning this...
1. Is there an allusion to the first heaven and earth in Genesis 1 here? Yes! Revelation 20–22 contrasts with Genesis 1–3, best seen in this chart form adapted from Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983), 515:

The Consummation of All Things

Genesis 1–3	Revelation 20–22
“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (1:1)	“Then I saw a <i>new heaven and a new earth</i> ” (21:1)
Fellowship with God <i>broken</i> (3:8-10)	Fellowship with God <i>resumed</i> (21:3)
“In the day you eat of it you will surely die” (2:17)	“There will be <i>no more death</i> ” (21:4)
“I will greatly <i>multiply your sorrow</i> ” (3:16)	“There will be <i>no more... sorrow or crying or pain</i> ” (21:4)
Husband and wife (2:18-25)	Lamb and bride (19:6-9)
“God made <i>two great lights</i> ” (sun and moon; 1:16)	“The city <i>does not need the sun or the moon</i> ” (21:23)
“The darkness he called <i>night</i> ” (1:5)	“There will be <i>no night</i> there” (21:25; 22:5)
Satan <i>appears</i> to deceive humans (3:1)	Satan <i>disappears</i> forever (20:10)
<i>Initial</i> triumph of the <i>serpent</i> (3:13)	<i>Ultimate</i> triumph of the <i>Lamb</i> (20:10; 22:3)
Defilement <i>enters</i> the garden (3:6-7)	Defilement <i>never enters</i> the city (21:27)
Trees and rivers (2:8-14)	Tree and river (22:1-2)
<i>Prohibition</i> from the tree of life (3:24)	<i>Access</i> to the tree of life (22:14)
“ <i>Cursed</i> is the ground because of you” (3:17)	“ <i>No longer</i> will there be any <i>curse</i> ” (22:3)
Man <i>driven from God's presence</i> (3:24)	“ <i>They will see his face</i> ” (22:4)
Man's dominion <i>broken</i> in the fall of the first man, Adam (3:19)	Man's dominion <i>restored</i> in the rule of the new man, Christ (22:5)
First paradise <i>closed</i> (3:23)	New paradise <i>opened</i> (21:25)
First rest for God (2:1-3)	Final rest for man (14:13)

Adapted from Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983), 515.

Here we see the first three chapters of the Bible (where man's fellowship with God is broken) compared to the last three chapters of the Bible (where man's fellowship with God is restored). Do you know what to call the rest of Scripture in the middle (Gen. 4–Rev 19)? It's called missions!

2. Question: Does “then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had *passed away*, and there was no longer any sea” (Rev 21:1) refer to a *different* galaxy and planet (annihilation and replacement of the present creation) or does it refer to this *same* planet and solar system which is judged with fire but renewed?

Answer:

- a. Annihilation View: Some verses seem to indicate that the entire solar system will be destroyed or annihilated after the millennium (Walvoord, 305-6, 311; Hal Lindsey, *There’s a New World Coming*, 287):
- 1) “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will *disappear* with a roar; the elements will be *destroyed* by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be *laid bare*... That day will bring about the *destruction* of the heavens by fire, and the *elements will melt* in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:10, 12b). Does this fit annihilation more than a partial destruction followed by a remade planet?
 - a) A figurative sense to the word “disappear” (παρέρχομαι) means to “pass away, come to an end, disappear” (BAGD 626a). This may denote annihilation:
 - 1] “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth *disappear*, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means *disappear* from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18; Luke 16:17). The words of Scripture are assured from disappearing. A concept of renewal cannot be sustained here (unless it refers to disappearing *as we know it?*).
 - 2] “... this generation will certainly not *pass away* until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will *pass away*, but my words will never *pass away*” (Matt. 24:34-35; Mark 13:30-31; Luke 21:32-33).
 - 3] “...one who is rich should take pride in his low position... he will *pass away* like a wildflower” (Jas. 1:10). But after death he *will* still exist.
 - 4] “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old *has gone*, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17). Yet it doesn’t mean annihilation of consequences.

Summary: The word “disappear” *could* have the idea of nonexistence above, but doesn’t *need* to mean the total *removal* of the present planet.
 - b) The word “destroyed” (λύω) used three times in 2 Peter 3:10-12 may mean either to “break up into its component parts” or “to destroy, bring to an end, abolish, do away with” (BAGD 483d). The first sense is used of a ship breaking up (Acts 27:41), the breaking up of a meeting (Acts 13:43), and the destruction of the barrier between Jew and Gentile in the church (Eph. 2:14). The second meaning refers to destroying the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and the abolishment of the Sabbath (John 5:18). Most, if not all, of the above texts seem to connote a nonexistence, but this is debatable.
 - 2) At the time of the end, the sky will be rolled up like a scroll (Isa. 34:4; Rev 6:14) as it will be said that “earth and sky fled from [God’s] presence, and there was no place for them” (Rev 20:11). This may denote annihilation (though the Rev 6:14 text relates to the Tribulation, so over 1000 years will still remain).
 - 3) Christ said he was going to his “Father’s house” (heaven) to “prepare a place” for his disciples until his return (John 14:2-3). Since this “place” is being created now, it must be separate from the present creation rather than a renovation of it. (However, “place” probably refers to the New Jerusalem, which is completely new, while at the same time allowing for a renovation of our present earth.)
 - 4) The New Jerusalem will not need a sun or moon (Rev 21:23), so celestial bodies may have been annihilated. (But the text does not specifically say that a sun or moon will not exist—it only notes that the city is not dependent upon them.)

- b. Renewal View: In contrast to the annihilation view, other verses seem to indicate that our same planet is judged and renewed without annihilation:

- 1) The final phrase of 2 Peter 3:10 notes that “the earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (NIV translation of εὐρεθήσεται, to “find, discover” BAGD 325a, c) implies continuing existence. This may mean “when the intervening heavens are burned away, the earth and its works, from the divine point of view, become visible. This provides an ironic contrast with the picture of the wicked trying to hide from God... (Isa. 2:19; Hos. 10:8; Rev 6:15-16)” (Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* [Word Biblical Com.], 319). In other words, after God’s judgment of the earth, it is not entirely annihilated—only its sin exposed.

Response: The text is quite uncertain here with seven alternate readings. One of them is that the earth “will *not* be found” and thus explicitly teaches annihilation. In fact, all the other five options teach annihilation as well.

Rebuttal to Response: The NIV follows the best manuscript (a) and is the most unusual rendering (and thus likely the original text).

- 2) The term “new” may indicate quality rather than age:

It is interesting to note that in the eschatological anticipation of Isaiah the prophet there is the strong theme of retaining the earth in a revised form, or its preservation by recreation (Isa. 34:4; 51:6; 65:17; 66:22)... The remaking of the heavens and earth does not mean something entirely new, but something qualitatively better than the old. The word *new* is the word *kainos*, which refers to something of superior value, functionally superior, a rejuvenated form. Age does not automatically disqualify the attribution of the adjective *new*, for the new Jerusalem used old-world jewels... ‘New wine’ or fresh wine was still wine...” (John Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, 82; cf. Ryrie, *Revelation*, 119).

Response: While “new” refers to a better quality, Gilmore’s illustration of wine is inadequate. New wine may be of better quality, but because it is fresh it is also newer in time. The same can be said for the new heavens and new earth. It will be better in quality as well as newer in time (Walvoord, 316).

Also, *kainos* can also mean “something not previously present” or something “unknown, remarkable” (BAGD 394a). It repeatedly has this idea (Mark 1:27; 16:17; John 13:34; Acts 17:19, 21; 1 John 2:7f.; Rev 2:17; 3:12; 5:9; 14:3).

Rebuttal to Response: When the word contrasts something old, however, it may have the meaning of superior in kind. For example, it is used of the new covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8; 13:9, 15), a new believer (Eph. 4:24; Gal. 6:15), and the results of being converted (2 Cor. 5:17). Also, the new entity (church) is composed of Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:15).

Isaiah uses *kainos* of the new heavens and new earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22), meaning the millennial (cf. below) reconstruction of the earth altered previously existing elements. It would make sense that the same meaning of “remade from existing parts” is intended by Peter (2 Pet. 3:13) and John (Rev 21:1).

- 3) The context of 2 Peter 3 mentions the “destruction of ungodly men” (v. 7). A different word is used, but that these unsaved men are not annihilated may argue for parallel meaning concerning the destruction of the elements (vv. 10-13).
- 4) The “elements will melt in the heat” of God’s final judgment of the earth after the millennium. Melting only changes the form of a substance but does not cause it to cease to exist. This would argue for a reforming of the earth.
- 5) The resurrected body will not be an entirely new body but a recreated old one (1 Cor. 15:35-54). This provides a natural parallel to the recreation of the old earth.
- 6) Creation today “eagerly awaits” the redemption of both it and God’s children (Rom. 8:19-22). This argues for recreating the earth, not replacing it.

- c. Conclusion: While one cannot be dogmatic on whether “new heaven and new earth” denotes an annihilation of the present creation or a renovation of it, the evidence seems to better support the renovation theory.

3. Question: Is John’s “new heaven and new earth” the same as Isaiah’s?

Answer: It has been thought that Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 use the identical phrase “new heavens and new earth” used of heaven by Peter (2 Pet. 3:13) and John (Rev 21:1). However, the latter two refer to “heaven” in the singular.⁴⁰ Also, even if the phrases were precisely the same, Isaiah is not required to point to the same referent since a term used in different contexts may not always have the same meaning. Even though my view is a minority view, I believe the authors refer to different periods.

Most commentators see the new heavens and new earth in Isaiah 66:22 as the eternal state (the same time as in Rev 21:1).⁴¹ However, others like me advocate Israel’s restored earthly kingdom,⁴² and Peters combines these two views by advocating an earthly kingdom in the eternal state.⁴³ Another perspective is more ambiguous, seeing only a time of a new radical theology.⁴⁴

However, Isaiah’s new heavens and earth is the kingdom age that *precedes* John’s new heaven and new earth (Rev 21–22). It is different from John’s new heaven and earth as the context in Isaiah indicates an earthly millennial scene (see next page).

⁴⁰George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 2:524-34, claims that Isaiah’s “new heavens and new earth” refers to the eternal state because of the usage by Peter and John. However, he provides patristic and scriptural support but never discusses the passage at hand in Isaiah (this context is addressed in the next paragraph above).

⁴¹Scholars who see the eternal state in view here include Rordorf, 46, n. 3; John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, AB, 200-201, 208, n. 22; Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, NICOT, 3:536; Herbert Carl Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:378; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 426-29. Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 4:332, 338, uses this text in an attempt to establish the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath, even in eternity. Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man*, 65, agrees by stating that glorified believers in heaven will still meet every seventh day for worship.

⁴²John A. Martin, “Isaiah,” *BKC*, 1:1120-1121; Feinberg, “The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day,” *BS* 95 (April-June 1938): 188-89; Unger, “The Significance of the Sabbath,” *BS* 123 (January-March 1966): 59; Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:111-12; *id.*, *Grace*, 263; *id.*, *Major Bible Themes*, Rev ed., 291. Bacchiocchi cites the verse as referring to “the Messianic age of the ingathering of all the nations” (*From Sabbath to Sunday*, 23). However, the official Adventist perspective on the Millennium sees it as a literal one thousand year period in which the righteous are in *heaven* judging angels and investigating the wicked deeds of the unrighteous in preparation for the Great White Throne Judgment. Simultaneously, Adventists see Satan bound *on earth* (not in the Abyss as in Rev 20:3), which is unpopulated (*Questions on Doctrine*, 489-508). Ironically, though the major dispensational works do not mention the Sabbath in the Millennium, many dispensationalists believe in a millennial Sabbath while Seventh-day Adventists do not.

⁴³Peters, 2:499-505, says by “new” Isaiah refers to an eternal and renewed earthly kingdom, noted in Rev 21 (2:499).

⁴⁴R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, NCBC, 276, suggests that the prophecy “marks the beginning of a new radical theology, born of the despair of post-exilic life, which the apocalyptic writers later adopted and developed in even more critical times.” This teaching dates chapters 40–66 many generations after Isaiah’s time during the reign of Cyrus (ca. 538 BC; *ibid.*, 20-22), and thus focuses on the time of the prophecy rather than on its content.

Contrasting Isaiah's and John's "New Heaven(s) and New Earth"


	Isaiah's New Heavens and New Earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22)⁴⁵	John's New Heaven and New Earth (Rev 21:1)
<i>English Term Used</i>	Plural: "new heavens"	Singular: "new heaven"
<i>Time Period</i>	Millennium	Eternal State
<i>Life Span of Inhabitants</i>	Extended yet not infinite life (65:20)	Eternal Life
<i>Death</i>	Possible, though dying at 100 years old is "young" (65:20; cf. 66:24)!	No death (Rev 21:4) since death is previously abolished at the great white throne judgment (Rev 20:14)
<i>Marriage & Childbirth</i>	Possible (65:23)	Impossible (Matt. 22:30)
<i>Construction</i>	Building of houses and planting of vineyards (65:21)	Christ claimed that he himself would prepare a place for us (John 14:1f.).
<i>Animal Activity</i>	Peaceful cohabitation of wild animals (65:25a)	No animals are noted by John (except Rev 19:11) or in other texts on heaven
<i>Associated City</i>	Protection by God in Jerusalem (65:25b) with other cities assumed	Focus is the new Jerusalem (Rev 20–21) with no other cities assumed
<i>Gathering of Nations</i>	Brought to Jerusalem to see God's glory (66:18-20; cf. Zech. 14:16-19)	God's glory provides light for the nations (21:23-24)
<i>Priesthood & Temple</i>	Has a temple, priests, and Levites (66:20-21; cf. Ezek 40–43)	Has no temple (21:22), so by implication no priests are needed
<i>Celebrations</i>	New Moon and the Sabbath (56:6-7a; 66:23) ⁴⁶	No need for these since there will be no need for rest in eternity ⁴⁷
<i>Time</i>	Still existent	Abolished with night (Rev 22:5), so rest every seven "days" is absurd.
<i>Place of Worship</i>	Jerusalem (65:23)	Throne of God (22:3-4)

⁴⁵Isaiah 66:22 makes a comparison between the endurance of new heavens and earth and the endurance of Israel, which may indicate that a specific time period is not in view here at all. However, if a time period is indeed envisioned, it certainly cannot be the eternal state for Israel will see bodies just slain by the LORD (66:17) and this will occur at the time of the celebration of the Sabbath and New Moon.

⁴⁶Sabbath observance will be true of both Jews (Isa. 56:2, 4-5, 8) and Gentiles (Isa. 56:3, 6-7; 66: 23; cf. Zech. 8:20-23). As uncomfortable as this may seem to the modern Sunday observer, this is what the authoritative text indicates. The Sabbath, although not in effect in the present dispensation, will again find divine approval in the next. This teaching also supports a premillennial view of Scripture, for Isaiah affirms that Israel has a future.

⁴⁷Nevertheless, Young suggests that worship in the new heavens and new earth (which he sees as heaven) "will be in accordance with and in observance of the prescribed seasons of the Old Testament dispensation" (Young, *Isaiah*, 3:536). Similarly, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* notes that "the Sabbath is an eternal institution" (Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 4:338). Kubo agrees by stating that glorified believers in heaven will still meet every seventh day for worship (Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man*, 65).

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THE WORLD THAT PERISHED

The Transformation of Adam's World into Today's World



Rodinia

Most secular and biblical geologists believe that all the land has been together more than once. One of these supercontinents is called "Rodinia" (from the Russian word for "motherland"). Although scientists continue to debate its exact shape, when God spoke the dry land into existence on Day 3 of Creation Week (Genesis 1:9–10), He may have created a landmass similar to Rodinia.

Breakup


The Flood began with a breakup of the "fountains of the great deep" and an opening of the "windows of heaven" (Genesis 7:11; see below). This may have been the result of the breakup of the original supercontinent into huge plates of the earth's crust. These plates split, moved, and collided throughout the duration of the Flood.

Pangaea

There is evidence that suggests that, after the breakup, the land again smashed together, forming another supercontinent called Pangaea. This temporary supercontinent formed and broke up entirely during the Flood.

Transitional Period

Still during the flood, Pangaea broke apart, first into Laurasia and Gondwana and finally into the continents we have today. At the end of this period the Indian subcontinent slammed into the Eurasian plate, forming the Himalayan mountains.



Today's World

Today, we are left with evidence that the continents moved apart in the past. For example, the coastlines of South America and Africa fit together like pieces of a puzzle. Catastrophic plate movement also explains the fascinating magnetic pattern found in ocean floor rocks. These rocks record a "zebra stripe" pattern of magnetic pole reversals, switching back and forth between north and south (see below).

Flood Period

The worldwide Flood covered the entire globe—over the highest mountains of that day by more than 15 cubits (up to 26 ft [8m]) (Genesis 7:20).

"Fountains" and "Windows"

When Noah, his family, and their cargo of animals were safely aboard the Ark, the Flood began.

Thousands of miles of the earth's crust (surface rock plates) split apart along lines traversing the globe. The mantle (hot rock beneath) rose to fill the voids between the splitting plates. When this 2,000°F (1,093°C) rock contacted the cool sea-

water above it, the seawater flashed into steam. This formed a line of steam jets along the boundaries of the plates (possibly the "fountains of the great deep").

The immense and incredibly powerful steam jets shot tens of thousands of feet into earth's atmosphere. Significant amounts of seawater were also lifted into the atmosphere. For several weeks, this

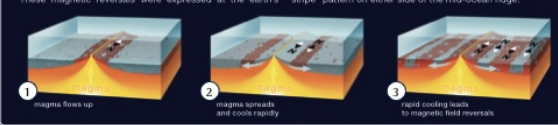
fell to the earth as intense global rain (possibly the "windows of heaven").

The rising of the mantle through earth's crust also resulted in a temporary rise in the global sea level, causing the oceans to flood the continents.

These simultaneous activities resulted in the dramatic shifting of the earth's crust to produce today's seven continents.

Magnetic Reversals

Within the catastrophic plate tectonics model, heat was rapidly lost from earth's outer core. This cooling resulted in the earth's magnetic field quickly reversing during the Flood. These magnetic reversals were expressed at the earth's surface as short periods of normal magnetization alternating with short periods of reversed magnetization. Illustrations 1–3 show how the reversals were expressed as a "zebra stripe" pattern on either side of the mid-ocean ridge.



© 2007 Answers in Genesis—USA www.answersingenesis.org This chart and associated text is based on the work of numerous scientists and is more fully described in Dr. John Baumgardner's DVD, *Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together: Global Tectonics and the Flood*.

4. Question: Will the “new heaven and new earth” have the same stars as our present solar system? The new Jerusalem will not need the sun or moon to provide light (Rev 21:23; 22:5) since God will be the light. But does this mean that stars, planets and moons will not even exist as part of the entire new creation?

Answer:

- a. It is true that the text does indicate that the sun and moon are not needed in the new Jerusalem. However, it may be stretching it to imply that celestial bodies are not needed outside this city to illumine the new earth.
- b. However, another way to look at the phrase “new heaven and new earth” is to take the two as identical. In other words, heaven will have come to earth:

Since God will make the new earth his dwelling place, and since where God dwells there heaven is, we shall then continue to be in heaven while we are on the new earth. For heaven and earth will then no longer be separated, as they are now, but will be one (see Rev 21:1-3).⁴⁸

Response: Technically, God will not dwell on the new earth as Hoekema claims but in the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2-3, 10-11, 22-24).



- c. Up to this point in this study we have looked only in general at the relationship between the old heaven and earth to the new heaven and earth. But how do the heavenly designations relate to one another? It is difficult to tell from Revelation 21–22 the relationship between the new heaven (v. 1), the new earth (v. 1), heaven (v. 2), and the new Jerusalem (21:2–22:5).
 - 1) Evidently each of these four are different parts, for the “new Jerusalem” comes down *out of heaven* (3:12; 21:2, 10), so it must be separate from it. (But this does not explain why God’s throne is in the new Jerusalem as in 22:1).
 - 2) While “heaven” (v. 2) could be the same as the “new heaven” (v. 1), this also seems unlikely. Why would the present heaven itself need to be renewed or replaced? It would seem that the “new heaven” then refers to new galaxies.
 - 3) Certainly the “new earth” (v. 1) is separate from the “new Jerusalem,” for the latter is a city rather than a planet. Some feel that this city will be so huge that it couldn’t be on the new earth (see next section), so it hovers above the actual city of Jerusalem on the renewed earth. Thus the new city actually serves as a satellite city from which the saints may come and go to and from the new earth.

⁴⁸ Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 274.



C. The New Jerusalem

1. *Figurative View*: Many scholars see this city as symbolic of the church (Morris, 242; Hendriksen, 199; Ladd, 276; Mounce, 370-71). These reasons are given:
 - a. The city is described as a “bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (21:2; see also vv. 9-10). Since the term “bride” often refers to the church (Isa. 54:5; Eph. 5:32; etc.), it would seem so here too (Hendriksen, 199). “Even in the Old Testament the Church is represented under the symbolism of a city (Isa. 26:1; Ps. 48; etc.)” (Hendriksen, 199).

Response: Contrary to popular belief, the church is never called the bride of Christ in the NT. Paul does use the husband-wife relationship to illustrate Christ’s love for the church (Eph. 5:32), but the word “bride” or “wife” is actually never used for the church. In fact, Rev 21:9-10 denote the “bride” or “wife” as the new Jerusalem itself—not the church! Also, Isaiah doesn’t mention the church; this is reading the NT back into the OT. Even a casual glance at the above texts will show that they do not refer to the church but rather to Jerusalem (Ps. 48; Isa. 26:1) or Israel (Isa. 54:5). Finally, more than just the church will live in this city (Heb. 12:22-24) so it cannot be equated with the church. The inscription of the names of both the 12 tribes of Israel (21:12) and the 12 apostles (21:14) argue that both Israel and the church will inhabit the city—not simply the church.

- b. “One wonders if John means to identify the heavenly Jerusalem with God’s redeemed people, even as the church is likened to the temple of God in the New Testament (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21)” (Ladd, 276-77).

Response: The church is indeed called a temple (Eph. 2:21), but it is composed of believers each of whom is also a temple (1 Cor. 6:19). However, just because it is called a temple in the epistles does not mean that it is a city in Revelation. The epistles do not contain detailed descriptions like John has here. If it is not to be taken literally, then why all the very physical depictions, including walls, pearls, specific jewels, and even measurements?

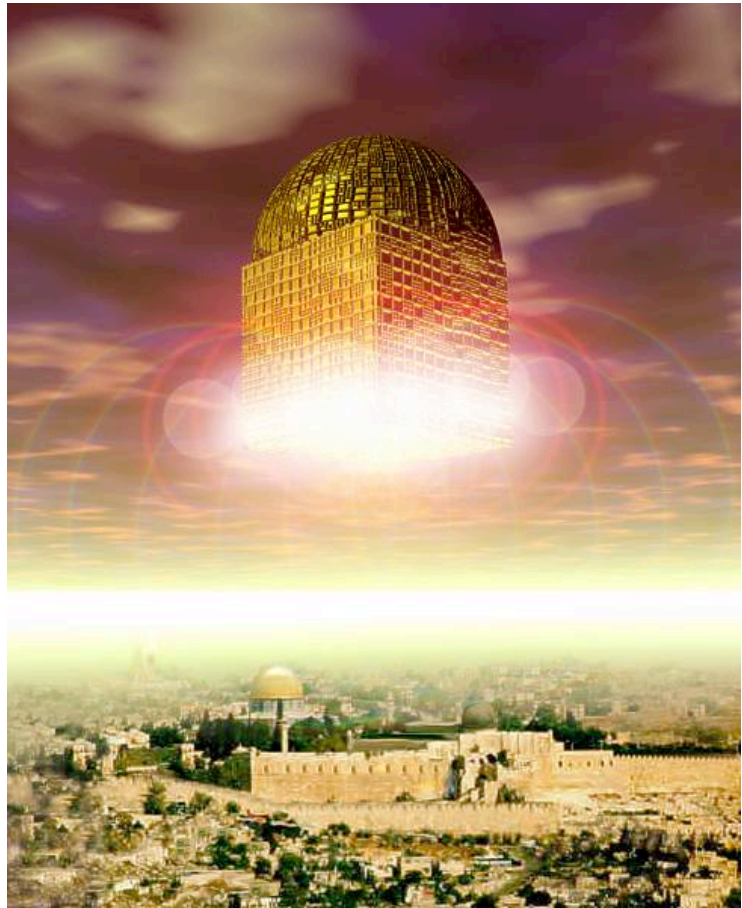
- c. The city and the bride are said to be one and the same. An angel told John, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” (21:9b-10).

Response: The above observation (bride = city) is true. The problem is the identity of the bride. As noted earlier, the church is never called the bride of Christ. Also, Hebrews 12:22 clearly distinguishes the new Jerusalem from its inhabitants: “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God...” Then the city and its inhabitants—angels, the church, OT saints (cf. Heb. 11:10), God, Christ—are specified in Hebrews 12:22-24 as separate.

- d. “There is a good deal of vivid description, sometimes of a very material kind. But when John speaks of streets paved with gold, of a city whose gates are made of single pearls, and the like, we must not understand him to mean that the heavenly city will be as material as present earthly cities. It is his way of bringing out the important point that the ultimate state of affairs will be very precious. He is concerned with spiritual states, not with physical realities” (Morris, *Revelation*, 242).

Response: Morris’ “sometimes of a very material kind” is a gross understatement. The *whole chapter* speaks of physical realities! The spiritualized view runs into great problems concerning authorial intent too. Would the original readers have spiritualized these things? I doubt it. Are we then arguing against a physical heaven like eastern mystics? Hopefully even those who argue against a literal view of the new Jerusalem still believe heaven is a literal place. We only have one physical description of heaven, so we must be careful not to throw it away so easily.

- e. Conclusion: The spiritualized view of the new Jerusalem is unlikely. Evidence for a literal view is clear from the following (some of this is review from above):
- 1) Physical measurements and specific descriptions (gates, walls, etc.) are given.
 - 2) The city is called the bride, but the church is not.
 - 3) The city and its inhabitants are distinguished (Heb. 12:22).
 - 4) The original readers would most likely have interpreted this literally.
 - 5) Even those who argue *against* a literal view here generally believe in a literal heaven (though they deny that this description is it).
 - 6) The alternate interpretations (i.e., that this is the church, all the redeemed, etc.) do not have contextual support either here or elsewhere in the NT.



2. *Literal View*: A more natural view of the text takes the passage at face value (Walvoord, 313, 323-24; Ryrie, 120-22; Paul Lee Tan, *A Pictorial Guide to Bible Prophecy*, 210; Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming*, 289). It says it is a city, so why not?

a. Names: Besides the “new Jerusalem,” this city has several other titles:

- the bride (Rev 21:9a)
- the wife of the Lamb (Rev 21:9b)
- Jerusalem (Rev 21:10)
- the Holy City (Rev 21:2, 10; 22:19)
- Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22a; Rev 14:1)
- the Heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22b)
- the city of the living God (Heb. 12:22c)
- the dwelling of God (Rev 21:3) or “tabernacle of God” (NASB)
- the city of my God (Rev 3:12), “my” referring to Jesus
- the heavenly country (Heb. 11:16a)
- the city (Heb. 11:16b)

Note that the numerous references to the city argue for a specific, literal city.

- b. Inhabitants: Who will dwell in the new Jerusalem? Hebrews 12:22-24 mentions this city and then seems to give a rather full list of its inhabitants, although they are not specifically designated as such. These are listed in the following order:
- 1) *God* (v. 22a): The first thing John noted about this city is that it came from God in heaven so that God himself will dwell with men (Rev 21:2-3). This wonderful aspect is often overlooked in our many questions about heaven. The best selling point for heaven is that we will be with God!
 - 2) *Angels* (v. 22b): These number “thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.”
 - 3) *Church Saints* (v. 23a): Each has his or her name written in the book of life (cf. Rev 20:15).
 - 4) *Redeemed Outside the Church Age* (v. 23b): These “spirits of righteous men made perfect” are distinguished from the church and probably mean those redeemed before Pentecost (Noah, Abraham, Rahab, etc.) and those saved in the Tribulation (Rev 6:9-11; 7:1-17; 20:4).
 - 5) *Christ* (v. 24a): He is noted as the mediator of a new covenant. John elsewhere promised that when we see him we shall be like him (1 John 3:2).

Question: If all these people are living in the city, then who lives in the new earth and who lives in the new heavens? Or are these places simply locations to which we can make excursions from our “headquarters” at the new Jerusalem? This is boggling to even think about, but we don’t have enough data to answer with any certainty.

- c. Time: Will the heavenly Jerusalem exist only during the eternal state or during the millennium as well? Some advocate that the new Jerusalem will be present during the 1000-year millennium (e.g., Lindsey, 289; Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 577; William Kelly, *Lectures on Revelation*, 459f., and *Exposition of Revelation*, 248f.). Ryrie agrees, for while Revelation 21:1–22:5 relates to the eternal state,

[Some commentators] feel that 21:9-21 reverts to a description of the millennial state. This would seem incongruent with the chronological pattern of the book and this section. Perhaps the best way to understand this entire section is to regard the new Jerusalem as the abode of the redeemed of all ages. Conditions within the new Jerusalem are conditions of eternity. Of course the redeemed will be inhabiting the city during the millennium as well as during eternity. Always the conditions within the city are eternal, even when the city is related to the millennium... [21:9-27] describes the city’s relation to the millennial state. In other words, there seem to be two descents of the city, 21:1-8 being the one in relation to eternity and 21:9–22:5 the one in relation to the millennium (Ryrie, 118, 120)

Support:

- 1) It would seem inappropriate for the church to have been raptured and living with Christ for seven years that is followed by 1000 years on the old earth again. This would also be a major “let down” for believers!
- 2) Some factors in Revelation 21:9–22:5 seem to indicate a millennial rather than eternal scene:
 - a) The descent of the city is noted twice. All agree that the first descent in verse 2 relates to the eternal state since the earth will have no sea. In contrast, many millennial passages mention bodies of water. It is possible that the second descent (v. 9) denotes a different time period, if contextual factors support it.
 - b) The kings of the earth bringing their splendor into the heavenly city (Rev 21:24, 26) is parallel to the same happening with the earthly Jerusalem (Zech. 14:16-19).

- c) Leaves for the healing of the nations (22:7) would hardly be needed in the eternal state but would be handy in the millennium.
- 3) The book of Revelation is mostly chronological, but certain exceptions do occur. Some events in chapter 17 actually occur before some preceding chapters. Thus it is not totally out of character that 19:9f. occurs before 19:1-8.

Response:

- 1) Ryrie notes that the redeemed of all ages will live in the city. This logic would also imply that the same is true of the present—that all saved people who have died presently live in the city.
- 2) It is best to argue for a chronological approach unless clear factors argue against it. The city is not revealed until after the millennium (20:1-6), judgments (20:7-15), and creation of the new heaven and new earth (21:1).
- 3) Other passages relating to the millennium note that believers will reign with Christ not from the suspended city, but will reign on the earth (Rev 5:10; 20:4-6). However, we also will reign from the new Jerusalem as well (22:5), though these are in two different time periods.
- 4) The description of the city in 21:2 matches that of 21:9, so the natural reading is that both relate to the same event.
- 5) The implication that no temple exists during this time (21:22) is inconsistent with the millennial age when Ezekiel's temple will be on earth (Ezek 40-43).
- 6) We do not know whether a return to a millennial earth after seven years with Christ in heaven will actually be a "let down" for us. After all, Christ himself will be reigning, and we will reign with him.
- 7) The kingly splendor (21:24) finds a parallel to millennial descriptions, but just because the descriptions are similar, it does not mean they are the same. One clear difference is that Zechariah clearly had in mind the earthly Jerusalem whereas John's vision related to the heavenly city.
- 8) Leaves for the "healing of the nations" (22:2) do not necessitate a millennium. The word here should be understood as "health-giving" since the root meaning carries the idea of serving or ministering. "In other words, the leaves of the tree promote the enjoyment of life in the new Jerusalem, and are not for the correcting of ills which do not exist...as indicated in verse 3" (Walvoord, 330).
- 9) It is not unthinkable that mortal and immortal believers could live together on the earth with the latter living in a separate place. Jesus mixed with his disciples for 40 days in his glorified body, so by God's grace we could do the same.

Conclusion: It appears that the new Jerusalem will be in the eternal state and not in the millennium.

- d. **Size:** Ancient people needed a city to guarantee security, so some scholars feel this “description of the church” in the form of a city of enormous size was given to comfort believers. However, this still doesn’t answer where believers will be for eternity. Is not a literal place needed to inhabit the saved from all ages? And would not heaven have to be very large (literally)! Just how large is it?
- 1) **City Size:** The width and length are equal at 2200 kilometers (Rev 21:16). This is the same distance from Singapore (south) past Borneo to Sulawesi (east) to Manila (north) to China (west)! Such a city has never even been dreamed of being built on earth, for this place is roughly half the size of all southeast Asia!



Placed over the present Middle East, the city covers from Turkey to Ethiopia and stretches from Greece to Turkey!



- 2) **Wall Size:** The wall measurement is 144 cubits or 65 meters (216 feet). But no adjective appears to show whether it means “thick” (NIV text) or “high” (NIV margin; Ryrie, 121). If “thick” is correct and the walls extend to the top of the city this would make the wall 11,616,000 feet high (2200 kilometers)! However, if the 65-meter reference is to the *height* of the walls, then the walls will extend up only 0.00018595% of the city height! Either case is beyond imagination.



e. Shape: The height is the same as the width and length, but the actual shape of the city is not stated.

1) The three identical dimensions makes one think immediately of a cube—especially since it has walls (Rev 21:12-14, 17-21; cf. Tan, 210). This also finds parallel in God’s earthly dwelling place within the cubed holy of holies in the tabernacle (Exod. 26:15?) and Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 6:20).

2) However, some see it as a pyramid shaped city (Hoyt, 226; cf. Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, 334):

Christ, the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20), will appear at the top where the throne of God will be located, and from which there will issue the river of pure water (Rev 22:1). From this point too will issue the light that floods the city and the surrounding region (Rev 21:23).

3) J. Vernon McGee thinks that the city is a cube in space within a crystal sphere:

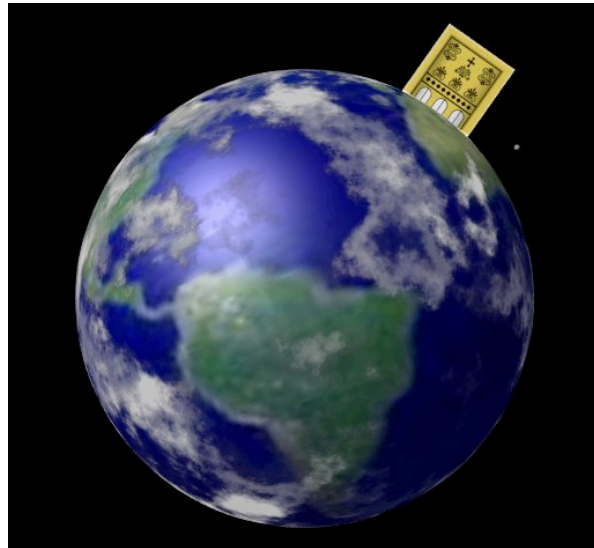
Several times attention is called to the fact that the city is like a crystal-clear stone or crystal-clear gold. This emphasis leads us to believe that the city is seen through the crystal. We live *outside* the planet called earth, but the Bride will dwell *within* the planet called the New Jerusalem. The glory of light streaming through this crystal-clear prism, will break up into a polychromed rainbow of breath-taking beauty (*Reveling Through Revelation*, 2:104-5).

Conclusion: The arguments for a pyramid shape could as easily be applied to a cube, but high walls seem out of place with a pyramid. McGee’s view is also unlikely as the *city itself* is clear as crystal (21:11) and no sphere is noted. It appears that the traditional cube shape is a better option.

f. Colors:

- 1) General: The overall impression of the city is indescribable, but John did his best: “It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal” (21:11).
- 2) City: Gold as “pure as glass” or “like transparent glass” is used for both the buildings (v. 18b) and the street (v. 21b). While hues abound, yet everything has a sense of translucence—after all, there will not be any reason to hide anything! “Also, no one wants to be out of sight of Jesus for very long, and this way you can see Him twenty-four hours a day!” (Lindsey, 292).
- 3) Wall: The wall is made of jasper alone (v. 18a).
- 4) Gates: White is prominent since each of the twelve gates is made from a single pearl (21:21). Some who deny the literal view question the “size of the oyster,” but this only shows their lack of confidence in God’s abilities.
- 5) Foundations: The foundations are made from 12 precious stones (Rev 21:19-20). God seems to like green as the foundation is probably green more than any other colour. However, several of these stones come in a variety of hues, with the following options (numbers refer to layer in the foundation):

Layer	Stones/Hues	Clear	Green	Blue	Red	Yellow	Brown	Purple
Wall	Jasper (v. 11)	x						
12	Amethyst							x
11	Jacinth			x	x			
10	Chrysoprase							
9	Topaz		x	x		x		
8	Beryl		x	x				
7	Chrysolite		x			x		
6	Carnelian				x			
5	Sardonyx				x		x	
4	Emerald		x					
3	Chalcedony		x					
2	Sapphire			x				
1	Jasper	x						



- g. Location: Does the city rest on earth or is it suspended above the earth? Some point to the foundations as evidence that it will rest on the earth (Lindsey, 289).

However, others note that the new Jerusalem will hover over the earth as a satellite city (Walvoord, 312-13; Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 577). If indeed this heavenly city exists during the millennium with the present Jerusalem still existing, it seems likely that the new city will be at the spot of the old, though not squashing it! While the city is seen descending to the earth (Rev 21:2, 10) it is never stated that it actually reached earth. This may also explain how believers with mortal bodies (who lived through the Tribulation) could live on earth at the same time as those in glorified bodies. The latter would dwell in the suspended city.

- h. God's Presence takes the place of any temple (Rev 21:22), where he formerly dwelt on earth prior to the giving of the Holy Spirit. We will serve him and actually see him face to face (22:3-4). The traditional view of heaven sees *us as going up* to God, but Scripture records *God as coming down* to dwell with us (21:3)!

- i. The River of Life flows from the throne of God (Rev 22:1-5), presumably at the top of the city. Evidently the same tree of life that used to be in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22, 24) is large enough to straddle the river that flows from “Main Street.” Incidentally, this is the only street mentioned in connection with the city.



D. Will There Be Degrees of Reward in Heaven?

1. Most Christians assume varying degrees of reward in the new Jerusalem. But the Bible emphasizes millennial rewards more than in the eternal state (see Joseph Dillow, *Final Destiny: The Reign of the Servant Kings*). Yet it does teach heavenly degrees of reward:
 - a. John encouraged a woman to deny hospitality to false teachers so that she could “receive a full reward” (2 John 8). This would indicate that a reward of a lesser degree was possible due to her action. In fact, he warns her, “Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for...”
 - b. Certain rewards are promised people who serve in various capacities (cf. rewards and crowns below on this page). This would mean that those who do not do them would not receive these particular rewards. Therefore, the reward is not equal for all. In this light, Paul noted, “The Lord will reward everyone for whatever he does, whether he is slave or free” (Eph. 6:8; cf. 1 Cor 3:15; 2 Cor 5:10).
2. What is the nature of these rewards? What will these rewards be like?
 - a. Rewards of Responsibility (cf. W. A. Criswell and Paige Patterson, *Heaven*, 208-14)
 - 1) In Luke 19:11-27 (Parable of the Ten Minas) Jesus taught that before going on a journey, a nobleman gave each of his ten servants the same amount of money—one mina each. Upon returning, the master rewarded each accordingly with differing degrees of responsibility based on their faithfulness.
 - 2) Matthew 25:14-30 (Parable of the Talents) records a similar story, except each man received a different amount of money to invest for his master (the one who buried his master’s money depicts an unsaved man, v. 30). This parable also depicts varying degrees of reward: “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’” (v. 21).
 - b. Rewards of Possession
 - 1) Five crowns (*stephanos*) are noted as personal possessions in heaven (cf. p. 76). These crowns are not kingly crowns (*diadems*), but victor’s wreaths made of vines or leaves (or even gold and silver in the form of a garland or wreath):
 - a) An *incorruptible crown* is for those who master their flesh (1 Cor. 9:25).
 - b) A *crown of hope or joy* is for those who bore fruit in others’ lives for Christ (1 Thess. 2:19). This is sometimes called the soul-winner’s crown.
 - c) A *crown of life* is for believers who patiently endure trials and suffering (James 1:12; Rev 2:10).
 - d) A *crown of righteousness* is for one longing for Christ’s return (2 Tim. 4:8).
 - e) A *crown of glory* rewards spiritual shepherds who feed the flock (1 Pet. 5:4).
 - 2) We too often view ownership as sinful, though this is not scriptural.
 - a) Eternal life is a heavenly inheritance by God’s grace which is “imperishable and undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4 NASB). This is what Paul calls being “heirs of God” (Romans 8:17a).
 - b) But perseverance is the condition to be “co-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17b)—only granted “if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (cf. Heb 3:14). This is joint-ownership in a communal sense but “to deny private property inevitably ends in denying privacy” (Gilmore, 302) much like the mystical idea of blending into the “Total One.” Ownership will not include the sinful possessiveness of earth.

3. However, Blomberg argues against levels of reward (Craig L. Blomberg, "Degrees of Reward in the Kingdom of Heaven?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 [June 1992]: 159-72). He provides some interesting thoughts:

- a. The vineyard worker parable teaches that each worker received the same pay no matter how long he worked (Matt. 20:1-16). This teaches that all believers are rewarded equally since all receive pay by grace. The ending, "the last shall be first, and the first, last" (v. 16), means that all positions in heaven are interchangeable.

Response: Do they indeed receive pay by grace? In each case the pay was for work, not faith. The main point that "the last shall be first, and the first, last" (v. 16) may better indicate that God's system of ranking people in heaven differs from that which man uses on earth.

- b. Scholars do not agree on the form these differing heavenly rewards will take. Suggestions include capacity for service, added responsibilities, degree of bliss, possessions, and an enriched relationship with God.

Response: Our ignorance of the type of reward does not deny its existence (see preceding discussion for more details on types of reward).

- c. If heaven is perfection, how can there be varying degrees of perfection?

Response: This may seem inappropriate from our vantage point since we are not God, but he has made many perfect things that differ in quality even in our present world. For example, plants are perfectly made yet less durable than jewels.

- d. Blomberg considers passages generally used to teach rewards not convincing.

- 1) The crown passages speak of the reward of eternal life itself, not something in addition to it (1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4). [But this does not seem to be the normal reading of each passage.]
- 2) The texts about those who are the "least" or "greatest" relate only to the "present aspects of the kingdom" (Matt. 5:19; 11:11; 18:4; Mark 9:34-35; Luke 9:48). [No, for people here are compared with the least of the people there.]
- 3) The quality of each man's works and their rewards (1 Cor. 3:11-15) relates to degree of shame or satisfaction at the judgment (cf. 1 John 2:28), not the lasting results of it which persist for all time in an everlasting hierarchy. [Even this is not correct, since verse 14 declares that "if what he has built survives, he will receive his reward." It is true that the nature of the reward is not stated, so the belief that it is merely momentary satisfaction may be true or false—no one knows. However, 2 Corinthians 5:10 does indicate that each will be judged for his deeds and "will receive what is due him."]

Other arguments of Blomberg should be considered. This article is worth reading. Perhaps we need to re-evaluate long-held views in this area.

E. **How Will Our Bodies Be Different Than They Are Now?** This is a mystery somewhat, but here are some of my personal opinions...

1. We will have individual places for each believer to live (John 14:2)! The old KJV translation “in my Father’s house are many mansions” is unfortunate as the word simply means “dwelling places” (NASB) or “rooms” (NIV). Since the new Jerusalem is far from being a literal “house” (as it is a city), we will have neither rooms in a mansion nor “mansions in a house.” What kind of structure in the city we will live in is unstated. Perhaps more faithful ones will have better HDB flats (Heaven Development Board)!



2. We will have the ability to eat (Rev 19:9?; 22:2?) but no need to do so!
3. We will be able to transport ourselves by thought as Jesus did in his glorified body (Luke 24:36).

Disagreeing with this is Hoyt, 229-31, who believes that saved humanity in the eternal state will be composed of two basic groups:

a. *Glorified (resurrected) saints* include...

- 1) Members of the Church in glorified (transformed) bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-54)
- 2) Old Testament saints and martyred tribulation saints who “will experience glorification by resurrection (Rev 20:4-6; Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:19-21)” and a “special relation to the New Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-24)” (Hoyt, 230).

b. *Mortal (non-resurrected) saints* who will be saved in the Tribulation and enter the millennium in mortal bodies. Hoyt says that in heaven they’ll lack the sinful nature that they had in the millennium and still have the ability to procreate in their natural bodies on the new earth. Perhaps Isaiah 60:19-22 supports this.

Response: Hoyt correctly notes that the Scripture does not say that the *non-resurrected* millennial redeemed will receive transformed, glorified bodies. However, he assumes (though unstated as an assumption) that God annihilates their sinful nature that is active in the millennium. I feel that the transformation of their bodies into glorified bodies is just as likely as the elimination of their sinful nature—both about which Scripture remains silent. Also, angels and people are not married in heaven (Matt. 22:30). Finally, death will still be possible for those with mortal bodies in the millennium (Isa. 65:20), but Hoyt assumes death will happen only to non-Christian children of those believers entering the millennium from the Tribulation.

4. We will have the ability to recognize one another (same race, sex, color): Don’t worry, you will still be Chinese (or whatever your ethnicity now)! Many dispensationalists teach that the distinction between Israel and the church continues even throughout the eternal state (e.g., Hoyt, 232-33). Hoyt says that the church will have the highest position, OT and Tribulation saints second highest, and then those in natural bodies include Israel and the Gentiles. I need more study here, especially on the various heavenly groups in Hebrews 12:22-24.



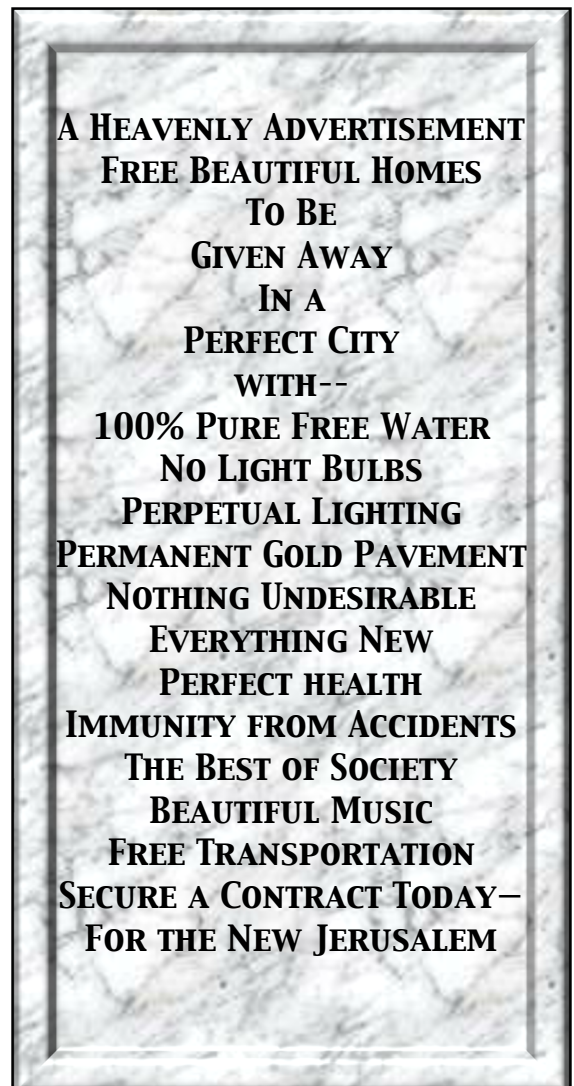
F. **What Will We Do in Heaven?** How will we occupy our time?

1. Oftentimes our focus is upon rest. Perhaps that's because we work too hard here! (When I ask Singaporeans, "How are you?" most respond, "Busy" or "Tired.")
2. It is true that Scripture refers to death as rest (Gen. 47:30; 1 Kings 1:21; Ps. 16:9; Dan. 12:13; Rev 14:13).
3. However, the focus of Scripture is not rest, but service in heaven—restful work! Remember that Adam in the Garden of Eden was given purposeful work even before the Fall. In other words, work itself is not a curse—it's those cursed weeds that make the toil so hard. Service has always been part of heaven's environment.
 - a. The angels' job description is service. They don't just float around doing nothing!
 - 1) "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to *serve* those who will inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). This ministry of service for God by ministering to man includes delivering messages to those on earth (Luke 1:11-20, 26-38).
 - 2) Angels also serve God through *worship* (Isa. 6:3; Rev 4:8-11; 5:8, 14), *singing* (Rev 5:9-13; 15:1-4), and other ways. Since they are primarily servants, they refuse people to worship them (Rev 22:9; cf. Col. 2:18).

- b. The redeemed will also serve him in heaven:
- 1) "His servants will *serve* him" (Rev 22:3b).
 - 2) "They will *reign* forever and ever" (Rev 22:5b).
 - 3) "Jesus replied, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for *service* in the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:62).
 - 4) "...they are before the throne of God and *serve* him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them" (Rev 7:15).
 - 5) "and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to *serve* his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen" (Rev 1:6).
 - 6) "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to *serve* our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev 5:10).
 - 7) The redeemed will also sing (presumably in key, finally, for some!):
 - a) "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, *singing*: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!'" (Rev 5:13).
 - b) "And [the 144,000 redeemed Jews] sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth" (Rev 14:3).

There still remains *much* about heaven that we do not know and will not know until we arrive. In the meantime, let's praise God our place is reserved and say...

**"Amen! Come Lord Jesus!"
(Revelation 22:20)**



Traditional versus Biblical Views of Heaven

Traditions on Heaven	The Bible on Heaven
Man dwells with God	God dwells with Man (Rev 21:3)
We go to heaven	Heaven comes to us on Earth (Rev 21:2)
Our bodies have wings	Our bodies are like Christ's without wings (Luke 24:39-43; 1 John 3:2)
Live in clouds	Live in city (Rev 21:2-22:6)
No Earth	New Earth (Rev 21:1)
Peter at the gate	12 angels at 12 gates (Rev 21:12)
No animals	Animals (Rev 19:11, 14)?

DOES MAJOR SIN PROVE A PERSON IS UNSAVED?

REVELATION 21:8

by Bob Wilkin

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolators, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Recently I received a letter from a pastor who wondered about the meaning of this verse. The following is an expansion of my response.

Current Behavior of the Unsaved Is in View

Many pastors and commentators suggest that this verse is teaching something about the present behavior of the unsaved. It is viewed as being given to help us determine if we or others are headed toward hell or not.

One group holding this view (Reformed pastors and commentators) suggests that the verse concerns those who have never been saved. Anyone who is guilty of major sins shows he is unregenerate. Of course, they usually qualify this by saying that the verse concerns people *habitually* caught up in sins like immorality and lying. And what does *habitually* mean? That's hard to pin down, they say. They suggest that the more a person sins, the more likely it is that he or she is unsaved.

Another group (Arminian pastors and commentators) suggests that this verse is teaching that anyone who is guilty of major sins loses his or her salvation. According to this view only those who regularly confess and repent of their sins can enter God's kingdom. A failure to confess and repent results in loss of eternal salvation.

Neither of these views, however, is consistent with Scripture.

All believers sin and sin repeatedly (e.g., 1 John 1:8, 10). Some believers actually wallow in sin

(1 Cor 3:1-3; 6:18-20; 11:30; Gal 6:1; James 5:19-20; 2 Pet 2:18-22; 3:14-18). So the view that this verse is teaching that habitual sinners must never have been saved in the first place is untenable.

And, the Bible also teaches that believers can't lose their salvation (cf. John 4:14; 6:35; 10:28-29; Rom 8:38-39). Once a person is born again, they can never be un-born. Thus the Arminian loss-of-salvation view is also unscriptural.

Eternal Sinfulness Is in View

It is a mistake to think that this verse is describing the way the unsaved behave *here and now*. The verse says nothing about the *current* behavior of believers or unbelievers. Rather, it concerns the *eternal* sinfulness of unbelievers.

A parallel passage is John 8:24: "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." Unbelievers die in a state of sinfulness. Forever they remain sinners. Believers, however, do not remain in a state of sinfulness because they are justified by faith: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin" (Rom 4:8; see also vv 1-7 and Rom 8:33-34).

Revelation 21:8 says nothing about whether believers actually sin prior to death or not. Of course we know that they do. However, that is not in view in Rev 21:8. What is actually in view is the continued unregenerate and unjustified state of the lost. Because unbelievers upon death are sealed permanently as those who are unjustified, they remain sinners in God's sight forever.

There will be no sinners and no sin in the new heavens and the new earth. According to 1 John 3:2, "when He is revealed, we shall be like Him."

It is interesting to note that this basic message is found three times in Revelation 21-22 (Rev 21:8, 27; and 22:15), the section of the book

dealing with the eternal kingdom. A comparison of these three passages, and particularly the first and last, supports the conclusion that the sinful state of those in hell is what is in view. Space restrictions will not allow this here so I will address Rev 22:14-17 in the next issue.

If we look closely at Rev 21:6-8, we will discover that three groups of people are in view: (1) all who have received the free gift of eternal life, (2) those who have received the free gift and who also overcame the world in their Christian experience, and (3) all who did not receive the free gift of eternal life. The text can be laid out as follows:

All believers:

"I will give...freely..." (v 6b)

Overcoming believers:

"He who overcomes shall inherit..." (v 7)

All unbelievers:

"But the cowardly...murderers...shall have their part in the lake which burns..." (v 8)

It is naive both biblically and practically to conclude that all believers live victorious overcoming lives. Certainly nothing in Rev 21:6-8 gives that impression (cf. Rev 2:1-3:22; 22:14-17).

Conclusion

If the kingdom contained those still in a sinful state, it would not be as glorious as God intends. That would put an eternal damper on the joy the Lord Himself and we, His subjects, could experience.

Revelation 21:8 should be a joyous verse for us. Those who interpret it to mean that we need to examine our behavior to see if we are saved (or if we are still saved) have robbed it of its joy and replaced it with works-salvation gloom.

The kingdom will be truly joyful because everyone in it will be holy and sinless. ■

Outline continued from major point "D" on page 443...

- E. The reason God shows himself living with us in our eternal home in the New Jerusalem is to live for him in light of the imminent return of Christ (22:7-21).
1. Christ encourages us to live as if he can come any moment (22:7-17).
 - a. His first announcement of his soon return promises blessing for obedience (22:7-11).
 - b. His second announcement of his soon return promises reward for obedience (22:12-17).
 2. Christ warns of adding to or subtracting from this prophecy (22:18-19).

God guards his Word by judging those who tamper with it

A Stern Warning (22:18-19)

"I warn everyone who hears the prophecy of this book:

- **If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.**
- **If anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and the holy city, which are described in this book"**

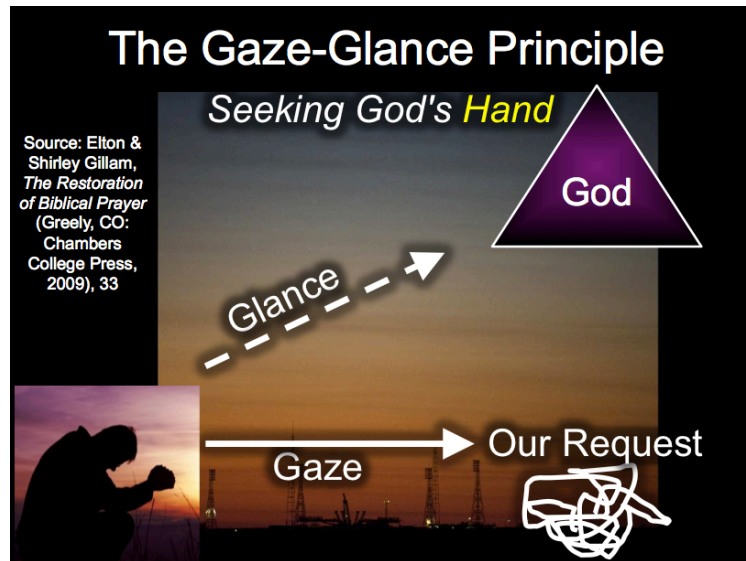
3. Christ promises us his imminent coming and grace (22:20-21).
 - a. His third announcement of his soon return promises assurance that Christ indeed gave this prophecy (22:20a).
 - b. John replied to affirm Christ's return and grace (22:20b-21).

Appendix A

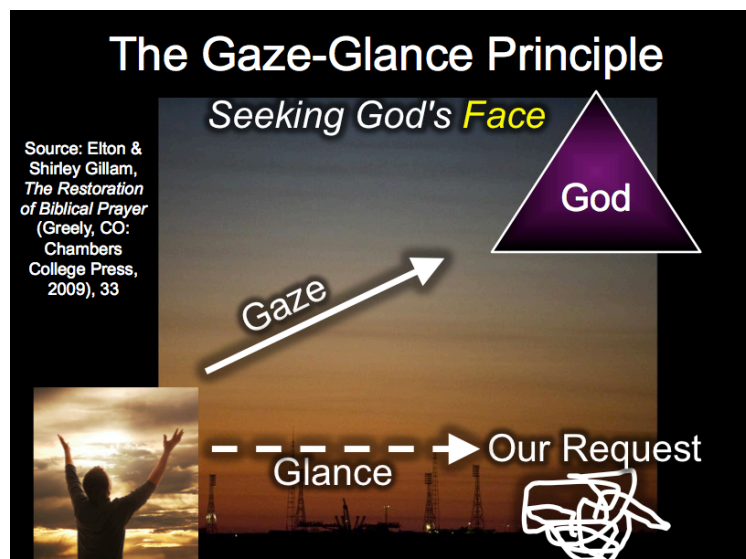
The Gaze-Glance Principle

Believers living during the late first century struggled on two fronts: (1) the imperial, external persecution of the Emperor Domitian, and (2) the internal compromise of churches caught up in immorality and adherence to false doctrine.

In trying times such as these, Christians are tempted to look down at their circumstances rather than to look up to the Lord. When we do look to him, our normal pattern is but to gaze at our request to remove the difficulty and only glance at God. This has been deemed as looking to God's hand for him to change the situation, diagrammed below.



Rather than glancing at God and gazing at our requests, we must do the opposite—to gaze at God and only glance at the request. This looks at God's face instead of looking at his hand.



Appendix B Preterists

One fourth-century view of the Book of Revelation now making a comeback is called the preterist view. Preterists see the book as largely fulfilled in the first few centuries of the church (*preterist* means "past"). In particular they look to the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem as fulfilling many prophecies in the Apocalypse. To argue this way they must maintain an earlier date (pre-AD 70) for the book, whereas the rest of biblical scholarship sees it as the last NT book written around AD 95. They also must defend Nero as the Antichrist and advocate the return of Christ in AD 70!

Contemporary preterists include Jay Adams, Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., George P. Holford, Gary DeMar, Jessie E. Mills, Jr., Don Preston, and Ed Stevens. These men offered the following books in the www.preterist.org website in March 2002 (the descriptions are theirs):

RESULTS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY -- by Jessie E. Mills, Jr. -- (reg. \$14.00) YOUR PRICE - \$13.00 (incl. USA shpg/hndlg). Written by a preacher who has been promoting the past fulfillment of prophecy since the 1950's. Takes a similar view of the resurrection as Stevens, Noe and Harden. Much excellent preterist material not found anywhere else. 200 pages pb

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM -- by George P. Holford -- (reg. \$7.00) YOUR PRICE - \$6.00 (incl. USA shpg/hndlg). Subtitled: "An absolute and irresistible proof of the divine origin of Christianity." Written in 1805. Calamities which befell the Jews in AD 70 and how they confirm Christ's predictions. 69 pages pb

THE TIME IS AT HAND -- by Jay Adams -- (reg. \$14.00) YOUR PRICE - \$13.00 (incl. USA shpg/hndlg). Defends a partial preterist view of eschatology against premillennialism. Deals with the imminency TIME texts in the book of Revelation to show how they demand an early date and first century application. 138 pages pb

THE BEAST OF REVELATION -- by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Th.D. -- (reg. \$16.00) YOUR PRICE - \$15.00 (incl. USA shpg/hndlg). Out of print for a few years. The first edition was outstanding. This revised edition has been significantly enhanced. Two major sections: "Who is the Beast?" and "When was Revelation written?" Presents much more evidence for the Nero identity of the Beast than any other book, including his other title "Before Jerusalem Fell." The second section on the early pre-70 date of Revelation has also been enhanced and is better than ever. The Preface says, "I have made numerous changes...strengthening the argument...very important emendations...easily justify the re-purchase of this title." Note that other sources for this book do not include shipping. Our price which includes USA shipping will save you \$3.00 or more. This is an excellent deal. Don't miss it. This book is not listed on our web site yet, so if you wish to order it on our web site you will have to mention it in our "Comments" box at the bottom of the Order Form. 246 pages pb

END TIMES FICTION -- by Gary DeMar -- (reg. \$16.00) YOUR PRICE - \$15.00 (incl. USA shpg/hndlg). Subtitled: "A Biblical consideration of the 'Left Behind' theology." Foreword by R. C. Sproul. A scholarly and pointed critique of the defective theology of the "Left Behind" series of books/movies. Here's what Gary DeMar has to say about the book: "The fictional Left Behind series by Tim LaHaye is a phenomenon to be sure, but does its message line up with what the Bible teaches? Can it survive an evaluation in the light of Scripture? Gary DeMar thinks not and he proves it in a scholarly, fair, and candid way. He exposes the poor exegesis of Lachaise's books and the inconsistency of his theology. *End Times Fiction* dares to challenge what millions of Christians uncritically accept as fact." This is one book you will want to read right away and share with your friends who are caught up in the *Left Behind* craze. Written from a mostly (if not totally) preterist viewpoint. Note that other sources for this book do not include shipping. Our price, which includes USA shipping, will save you \$3.00 or more. This is an excellent deal. Don't miss it. 232 pages pb.

PRETERISM

Updated & Adapted from a Presentation by Joshua Rungtung, Joni Siau & Penny Quek
For the SBC course Theology III (April 2009) for Dr. Rick Griffith

I. Introduction

When speaking about the biblical prophecies and the timing of tribulation in history, there are basically four possibilities in which time is being referred:

1. Preterism – the tribulation is “past”
2. Historicism – the tribulation is “present”
3. Futurism – the tribulation is “future”
4. Idealism – the tribulation is “timeless”

In a very brief way of summarizing these four views, the preterist (the Latin word, meaning “past”) believes that most, if not all, prophecy has already been fulfilled during the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The historicist (remember we said this is “present”) sees much of the current church age as part of the tribulation period. In other words, the prophecies in the Bible are being fulfilled right now. This may overlap with the view of the idealist as well.

The futurist, on the other hand, usually believes that most of the prophetic events will take place in the future. To him, the tribulation of the seven years, the Second Coming of Christ, the 1000-year millennium as well as the eternal state are all future events. The idealist does not believe that the prophecies in the Bible have timing for the events nor does it believe that one can determine the timing of these prophecies. They see prophetic passages as teachings of great truth about God and are to be used as an application to our present lives.

A. Definition:

Preterism is an eschatological viewpoint that sees most or all of Bible prophecy as being fulfilled sometime in the past. In other words, preterism holds that some or all of bible prophecies concerning the end times have been fulfilled in the 1st century AD after the death of Christ, at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Those who believe in Preterism are called Preterists.

Historically, there is a general agreement that the first systematic Preterist exposition of prophecy was written in 1614 by the Spanish Jesuit named Luis De Alcasar.⁴⁹

Kenneth Gentry, a modern preterist, has defined preterism as follows: “The word ‘preterist’ is based on the Latin term *praeteritus*, which means ‘gone by,’ or past. Preterism holds that the tribulation prophecies (of Matthew and Revelation) occurred in the first century, thus in our past.”⁵⁰

The view of the Preterist is not new to the prophetic debate. Proponents of Preterism argue that this position was the original eschatological understanding of the early Christian church. The historicists and others, of course, contest this claim. Some other Preterists, however, hold that the view was developed in the 17th century. This brings us to the variants of Preterism, but this shall be introduced in just a short while.

Kenneth Gentry claimed that the preterist view had a powerful influence in the last few centuries and many writings by famous scholars such as John Calvin (1509-1564), Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Henry Hammond (1605-1660), Thomas Scott (1747-1821), Moses Stuart (1780-1852) and Milton Terry (1840-1914) have been found.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Alan Johnson, “Revelation.” In *Expositors Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, 397-603 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:409.

⁵⁰ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. & Thomas Ice, *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 13.

⁵¹ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. & Thomas Ice, *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 13.

B. Types of Preterism

Preterists can be classified into three broad categories. There are the Extreme Preterists, the Mild Preterists and the Moderate Preterists

1. Extreme Preterists: They are also known as Radical Preterists, Full Preterists or Consistent Preterists. They believe that all events predicted in the Scripture, including the Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgments have already taken place.⁵² Sproul writes concerning them, "Radical Preterism sees all future prophecies of the New Testament as having already taken place."⁵³ The Moderate Preterists and the non-Preterists see Radical Preterists as outside of Christian orthodoxy.⁵⁴
2. Mild Preterists: The Mild Preterists believe that the tribulation was fulfilled within the first 300 years of Christianity when God judged his two enemies: (1) the Jews in AD 70 and (2) Rome by AD 313. However, these adherents still look towards the future Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
3. Moderate Preterists: They are also known as Partial Preterists. They teach that almost all prophecies have been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, but they also hold to a future Second Coming and bodily resurrection. Some of the proponents of Moderate Preterists are R C Sproul, Kenneth Gentry, etc.

Alan Johnson responds to the presupposition of the Preterists that Revelation 4-22 are events contemporary to John's time, "This approach identifies the book with the Jewish apocalyptic method of producing 'tracts for the times' to encourage faithfulness during intense persecution."⁵⁵ It needs to be noted that even if these prophecies were written to bring comfort and encouragement to those who are going through suffering, it does not rule out the fulfillment of the prophetic contents of God's word in the near or distant future.

To seek to answer all three types of Preterists, we will discuss some of the key issues that go across the various views of Preterists by analyzing their arguments and our responses.

⁵² Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* (Chicago: Moody, 1995, 2006), 156.

⁵³ R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998, 2000), 24.

⁵⁴ Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 157.

⁵⁵ Johnson, *Revelation*, 409. Johnson affirms that liberal interpreters have taken this particular methodology. He gives a bibliography of the books written by the Preterists and for further studies on Preterism, one can look it up at page 412. A more updated discussion is by Andrew M. Woods, "Have the Prophecies in Revelation 17-18 About Babylon Been Fulfilled?" in 2-parts, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169-170 (Jan-March 2012 & April-May 2012): 79-100, 219-40.

II. Arguments and Responses on Preterism

This study cannot cover all the views for supporting the Preterists of various forms, but we will highlight some few critical areas that would be important for our discussion.

A. The Dating of Revelation: External Evidence

Critical to the position of the Radical Preterists is that they must date Revelation before AD 70 so as to affirm that all the prophecies of the book of Revelation and the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 23-24 have been fulfilled by AD 70. It is also important to note that Preterists believe that “when John wrote Revelation, it was prophecy.”⁵⁶ David Chilton supported an early dating of Revelation based on the conclusion that the “second-century church Father Irenaeus and most other ancient witnesses were wrong in dating the book.”⁵⁷ Chilton further cites “Athanasius as proof of the canon’s completion by AD 70.” Thomas critiques Chilton’s view writing, “Careful scrutiny of Athanasius’ quotation, his comment on Gabriel’s words in Daniel 9:24, reflects that Chilton’s interpretation of it is quite forced.”⁵⁸

Response:

1. The traditional view of the dating of Revelation is around AD 95/96. Irenaeus states that the apostle John penned Revelation during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian. Eusebius quotes Irenaeus and confirms the same.⁵⁹ Most of the early church fathers agree with the date by Eusebius and Irenaeus, such as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Jerome and many others.⁶⁰ Beale affirms as well that “the difference of dating could alter the interpretation of the book, since the occasion prompting John to write might be different.”⁶¹ Thomas affirms the same that “most modern scholars concur” with the view that Revelation was written around AD 95/96.⁶²
2. With such a vast testimony to the dating of Revelation in the AD 90s, the Full Preterists’ basis of argument that the tribulations of Rev 6–19 (particularly the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments as well as the “beast of the book of Revelation”) to have occurred during the time of Nero stands unjustified for the simple fact that Revelation was not yet written at that point of time.
3. The Full Preterists argument that the Second Coming, resurrection of the dead and final judgment have taken place finds no scriptural support and most, if not all, other eschatological views would deem this theology unorthodox and unbiblical.

⁵⁶ Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 164.

⁵⁷ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 1:21.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, trans. By G.A. Williamson (New York, Penguin, 1989), 81. Eusebius noted that “There is ample evidence that at that time the apostle and evangelist John was still alive.”

⁶⁰ Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 164.

⁶¹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4. Beale dated the book around 95 AD and affirmed that this is the current scholarly opinion. This view is held broadly across various eschatological views and there is a consensus on the same.

⁶² Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 21. He clarified that if Irenaeus had been wrong, later church fathers and witnesses would have corrected him. Aune also discussed the external evidence for the dating of Revelation in his introduction to his commentary on Revelation 1-5 and affirmed from early church fathers like Justin Martyr, Polycarp and others that the book has to be dated during the reign of Domitian. For further details see, David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5, Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 52 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1997), lviii-lx.

B. Internal Evidence for Dating Revelation before AD 70

1. In Revelation 11:1-2, Preterists say John mentions the temple as standing when he was given the vision. So, in their view, if the temple was still standing when John recorded his vision, then the book of Revelation must have been written before the temple was destroyed in AD 70.⁶³ Sproul, a moderate Preterist, does acknowledge, "this is an argument from silence, but the silence is deafening."⁶⁴

Response:

Too often eschatological viewpoints and the hermeneutics are imposed onto the book of Revelation. It matters greatly whether we see Revelation symbolically, allegorically, literally, historically or as a mixture of some of these hermeneutical presuppositions. It would help to study the fulfillment of the OT prophecies and how they have been fulfilled literally. For example, we see a literal fulfillment that kings would come from Abraham's loins (Gen. 17:6) and where Jesus would be born (Micah 5:2). Since there is literal fulfillment of OT prophecies, it would seem reasonable to assume a literal fulfillment of New Testament prophecies as well.

The simple response formulated by Benware seems to be the most appropriate. It is clear that when Ezekiel had the vision of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48, the temple in Jerusalem was already destroyed 586 B.C. In the same way, it is not necessary for the temple to be standing for John to measure it. Herod's temple was destroyed in AD 70 and John received this prophetic vision during the reign of Domitian. Hitchcock, after analyzing in detail the temple passages from Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation, concludes that John was not measuring Herod's temple anyway: "In light of Revelation 11:3-13 and the parallels in Daniel and Ezekiel it is best to view the temple in Revelation 11:1-2 as a future, reconstituted temple."⁶⁵

2. A second line of defense for the Preterists is the number of the beast, which is 666 in Rev 13:18. This number is said to be the numerical value of Nero's name and hence, Revelation must have been written during Nero's time.⁶⁶

Response:

As discussed above, since Revelation was written in the AD 90s, this removes the possibility of linking the number of the beast back to Nero. Some eschatological groups that consider Revelation as history and not prophetic may also point it back to Nero as a possible point of argument. However, the statement in Rev 1:1 and 4:1 which states that the author of Revelation would be shown "what must soon take place" or "what must take place after this," removes beyond a shadow of doubt that the number of the beast must be future and not past or present. This is one of the contextual arguments for Revelation 13:18 favoring a future view.

Secondly, as Benware points out, "nowhere in Scripture is any number given specific theological meaning."⁶⁷ The text surrounding Rev 13 in relation to the beast which

⁶³ Kim Riddlebager, *The Man of Sin: Uncovering the Truth about Antichrist* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 181. Benware also advanced this as one of the three main arguments from the internal evidence that seems to favor the Preterists view of the dating of Revelation before AD 70. For further details, see Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 167. Beale brilliantly covers the arguments and responds to the early dating on the basis of internal evidence in his commentary (Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 20-27). Beale responds based on his idealistic eschatological view that they were symbolic and that it does not refer to any literal temple, neither to Herod's nor to any future temple.

⁶⁴ R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 147. Sproul admits that it would seem strange for the author of Revelation not to mention the destruction of Jerusalem had it been destroyed in AD 70 and the book was written in AD 96. This seems like a strong argument for the Preterists, but as we shall see, the internal evidence and the background setting of Revelation favors the dating of the 90s.

⁶⁵ Mark L. Hitchcock, "A Critique of the Preterist view of the Temple in Revelation 11:1-2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (2007): 219-236 (236).

⁶⁶ Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 168.

⁶⁷ Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 168. Benware, quoting John J. Davis, further explained that such methodologies of giving theological values is of Greek origin and finds its development primarily among the Gnostics, Neo-Pythagoreans, and Jewish allegorists. Furthermore, he also points to the inconsistency of the Preterists as to why they should take the number of the beasts literally whilst the other numbers and judgments in Revelation are taken symbolically or allegorically.

exercises authority for “42 months” (Rev 13:5) must be interpreted with other similar texts in Scripture. One must go to Daniel 9:24-27 and consider the context of that chapter. Nero did not exercise authority for just “42 months” and neither did any other Roman emperor in the first three centuries. Neither did “all inhabitants of the earth” worship Nero or other Roman emperors (Rev 13:8). Hence Rev 13:8 does not refer to Nero or any Roman emperor, but it is future.

3. The third internal evidence for Preterists for dating Revelation before AD 70 is Rev 17:10. Preterists see the “seven kings” as describing seven Roman kings from the first century. Then they argue that the sixth king is Nero.

Response:

The Preterist hermeneutics have become creative here. “In order for Nero to be the sixth king, certain kings were not counted.”⁶⁸ They also ignore other scriptural texts like the prophecies of Daniel, which form the basis for this prophecy. There are those who do not want to connect Daniel’s prophecy with the book of Revelation as it weakens their theological persuasion. Osborne has a warning for such an approach to the Scripture. He writes, “Do not impose your theological system upon the text.”⁶⁹ He further notes, “Non-dispensationalists stress the symbolic more.” OT prophets repeat similar judgments on the nations and Israel, and often use similar language like the “day of the LORD.” It is hermeneutical suicide to ignore other Scriptures that bear high similarity, especially those that pertain to end times.

Rev 17:10 has no reference to Nero or Domitian as Beale affirms.⁷⁰ It is best to see it in light of the book of Daniel and Rev 1:1 and 4:1 as future.

Hitchcock draws a parallel between Daniel and Revelation, showing successive kingdoms rather than interpreting them symbolically.⁷¹

Daniel 7:1-8	Revelation 13:1-2; 17:9-12
Four beasts (lion, bear, leopard, terrible beast with ten horns)	One beast that is like a leopard, bear, and lion (13:2) with ten horns (13:1; 17:3)
Seven heads representing four successive kingdoms	Seven heads representing seven successive kingdoms
Four kingdoms	Seven kingdoms
Ten horns (v. 7)	Ten horns (13:1; 17:3,12)

So, the eight successive kingdoms in Rev 17:9-11 are as follows:⁷²

1. Egypt (Pharaohs)
2. Assyria (Assyrian kings)
3. Neo-Babylonia (Nebuchadnezzar)
4. Medo-Persia (Cyrus)
5. Greece (Alexander the Great)
6. Rome (Caesars)
7. Reunited Roman Empire (ten kings)
8. Final Gentile world kingdom (the Antichrist)

Hitchcock concludes rightly on Rev 17:9-11:

⁶⁸ Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 169.

⁶⁹ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 219.

⁷⁰ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 870-75.

⁷¹ Mark L. Hitchcock, “A Critique of the Preterist View of Revelation 17:9-11 and Nero,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (2007): 484.

⁷² *Ibid.*

The successive-kingdoms view avoids the nebulous nature of the symbolic view, is consistent with the Old Testament imagery from Daniel 7, and provides a consistent interpretation of the eight kings. For these reasons this is the preferred view. Therefore Revelation 17:9-11 offers no support for the early date of Revelation based on the idea that Nero is the sixth king.⁷³

C. The Timing of Fulfillment of the Prophecies in Revelation

It is very important to Preterists who accept the AD 96 dating for the book of Revelation that the prophecies will be fulfilled very soon. Their support lies in the phrase “must shortly take place” (Rev 1:1, etc.). Preterists view the words like “shortly” or “soon” to relate to a short time and see the fulfillment of the many prophecies of Revelation as taking place during the first three centuries. This helps them to conclude the prophetic fulfillment of Revelation in the first three centuries.

Response:

The Preterists are inconsistent in their arguments. On one hand, they reiterate the literal view of “shortly coming.” On the other, they cannot explain the phrase “I am coming quickly” (Rev 2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). All Preterists (other than the Full Preterist) await the Second Coming.

When Osborne writes, “Prophecies of future events occur frequently,” he is not just referring to an immediate future, but also to a distant future.⁷⁴ A good example is the promise of the “seed” in Genesis 3:15 which was realized in Christ thousands of years later.

Secondly, they are not consistent in using the principles of hermeneutics as they use a literal understanding for phrases like “shortly,” while they employ symbolism for the Rev 6–19 judgments within the same genre. Hitchcock argues from grammatical and syntactical analysis, concluding that the usage of words like “soon” in prophetic literature does not mean “immediate future” but it has the sense of the type of the “soon return of Christ” which can be distant future.⁷⁵

Thirdly, as noted above, bodily resurrection, the Second Coming and the “wrath of God” (Rev 6:17) through the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments have not occurred yet and are future events. For a commentator to see these judgments as symbolic and current ongoing events requires great creativity. They must also draw in a lot of extra-biblical sources and pagan background literature to back up their claims.

D. The Timing of the Fulfillment of Matthew 10:23; 16:28 and 24:34

Important to the Preterists’ position is their understanding of the texts in Matthew. Matthew 10:23 says, “You shall not finish going through the cities of the land of Israel, until the Son of man comes.” In Matthew 16:28, Jesus declares to his listeners that some of them would “not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” Radical Preterists say that two verses coupled with “this generation” of Matthew 24:34 “prove that the Lord had to have come in the first century.”⁷⁶

Response:

1. The text in Matt 10:23 is understood in its larger context to mean “the evangelization of the rebellious nation of Israel will not be finished by them but will await His return, which is the point made by Paul (cf. Rom. 11:25-29) and the prophets (Zech. 12:10).”⁷⁷ It is true that some portions of the text in Matt. 10:16-22

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 212.

⁷⁵ Mark L. Hitchcock, “A Critique of the Preterist View of ‘Soon’ and ‘Near’ in Revelation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 470-473.

⁷⁶ Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 173-174.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 175.

had been fulfilled in that generation. However those persecutions cannot be equated with the tribulation of Revelation, which will initiate the millennium.

2. The context of Matthew 16:28 is the “Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” In order to understand what kingdom Jesus is referring to, one must connect this with Matt. 22–25 and Revelation 19–20. Then this must be compared with OT texts like Isa. 9, 11; Daniel 2, 9 and the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam. 7. Putting these texts together in their respective contexts, it is clear that the “kingdom” refers to the unscheduled future after Daniel’s Seventieth Week and specifically refers to the millennium. The burden of proof lies with the Preterists to demonstrate the reality that the Son of Man has come. The text further says that we will “see” the Son of Man coming, and it is in our judgment that it has not taken place. This kingdom does not refer to the spiritual kingdom but one that will be established at the coming of the Son of Man.
3. “This generation” of Matt. 24:34 does not refer to the generation who heard Jesus. Its preceding and following passages give the context of what Jesus was trying to say. “This generation” refers to a time period when the “birth pains begin” (Matt. 24:8). It will continue until “the gospel is preached to the whole world” (Matt. 24:14), the “abomination of desolation” spoken of by Daniel (Matt. 24:15; cf. Dan. 9:24-27) has taken place, and the “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21) has happened; *then* “the Son of Man will come” (Matt. 24:27). There were partial fulfillments of this prophecy at the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70, but most aspects await future fulfillment. This is consistent with prophetic literature, as the prophets integrated near and distant future fulfillments. One example is Isaiah 61:1ff, which Jesus reads in Luke 4:18-19a but stops at “... to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:19a; cf. Isa. 61:1-2a). He saw Isaiah 61:2bff as future. This would not have been obvious to the Jews in the OT times. Hence to draw on Jewish “apocalyptic understanding” can be off tangent, considering the total revelation in the Canon.

E. The Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24–25

Central to the Preterist position is their interpretation of the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24–25. They view all or most of these prophecies as fulfilled in the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. They would strongly depend on the phrase “this generation” of Matt. 24:34 to mean that generation who heard the Olivet Discourse. We have addressed some issues from Matthew above.

Response:

1. Some important responses to this text are addressed above, but other contextual observations are needed. Benware rightly points out that the preceding section of Matt. 23:35-39 clearly shows Christ telling the Jews that the Jerusalem temple would be destroyed. However, Matt. 23:39 also looks into the future to a time when Israel will welcome the Messiah. The OT prophets foresaw into the future to a time when Israel, as a nation, would be restored to their land.⁷⁸
2. Preterists view the “abomination of desolation” in Matt. 24:15 as fulfilled in the temple destruction in AD 70 at the hand of the Romans. However, Benware points out that the “differences between Matthew 24 and Vespasian’s destruction of the temple are great.”⁷⁹ The incidence and the texts surrounding Matthew 24 and Daniel 9 need to be taken into consideration. The background to the text lies in the three questions posted by the disciples in Matt. 24:3.

⁷⁸ The texts are too numerous, but we will highlight a few sample texts without priority or importance given to the order. Many texts see Israel restored in the future, such as Isa. 54 where God affirms an eternal covenant of peace. Ezekiel 36–48 sees Israel in the restored Temple worship. It is strange that we should bring our modern understanding into the text of this temple vision and make it symbolic. It needs to be noted that the vision of the ark and the holy place given to Moses was done exactly according to the given measurements (Exod. 39:32). It would seem even stranger to a non-Christian scholar to change the methodology of interpretation for Ezekiel’s vision of the temple within the same OT Canon.

⁷⁹ Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 179.

First, they ask him, "Tell us, when will all these things take place?" "These things" refers to Matthew 24:1-2. The answers Jesus gave here move into the far distant future as Daniel was shown the seventy years of captivity (Dan. 9:1-2). As he was praying and confessing (Dan. 9:20), the angel Gabriel came and revealed the plan of God till the "end of sin," which brings "everlasting righteousness" (Daniel 9:24ff).

The second question was "what will be the sign of your coming?" (Matt. 24:3). Jesus responded by giving the signs of his Second Coming that parallel Daniel 9 and other texts.

The third question raised was, "What will be the end of the age?" These last two questions are interlinked, and this is the whole purpose of the Olivet Discourse. Deviating from the context of the disciples' questions in these chapters will lead to a wrong meaning of the text and the timing of its occurrence. The "abomination of desolation" is to be particularly understood with the breaking of the covenant at midpoint of the tribulation (Daniel 9:27) necessitating further outpouring of God's wrath in the bowl judgments of Revelation. The "abomination of desolation" must not be confused with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The similarities must not mislead us into ignoring the differences between them. Differences, even if there is only one, must be given due consideration in prophetic literature.

The coming of Jesus has been dealt with above. Preterists would see the "signs in heaven" of Matt. 24:29-31 as a dramatic way of expressing national calamity or victory in battle.⁸⁰ The dangers of such symbolism or allegorizing of the text is very much present in the "health and wealth" gospel today. Spiritualizing such texts would legitimize the modern day gospel preachers and would do damage to the authority of the Scripture. It would then become a post-modernist way of looking at the text.

Conclusion

Although Preterists tend to be eclectic in their hermeneutics, we must not totally disregard their view. It can be helpful to see another perspective of interpretation of Scripture.

That understanding is not there for us to criticize or fight about but for us to learn to see things from a different angle than our own. Paul, in his second letter to Timothy reiterated, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome" (2 Tim. 2:24). We must understand that there are many different views and doctrines, but the point is not for us to push through our own understanding and interpretation.

This view needs to be weighed, so as to shed more light onto our own understanding. Perhaps it gives us an even firmer reason to stick to our own beliefs and understanding. Or does it throw doubt at us? If so, we should then spur us to dig deeper into the Word of God for further study and understanding.

As pastors or teachers, this can then ensure that we are teaching the Scripture as it is (or at least the way we have understood it, having thought through and debated it) and not mislead others or have anything to do with "irreverent silly myths" or "worldly fables" as Paul warned about in 1 Timothy 4:7.

⁸⁰ Gentry and Ice, *The Great Tribulation*, 55. Their line of defense seems reasonable in light of OT texts like "the mountains quake at the presence of the Lord," where in reality the mountains may not have quaked. This line of argument is taken up by the Preterists. Gentry further comments, "Prophets often express national catastrophes in terms of cosmic destruction." This point is well taken but what they fail to recognize is that the context of whether the cosmic disturbance is referring typologically to some national destruction, or it is actually referring to actual cosmic disturbances. Contextual understanding and usage of such words by the prophets in view of the culmination of history with texts in Daniel and Revelation would affirm a real occurrence of such cosmic disturbance of immense proportions. Matthew 24:21 makes it clear that this "great tribulation," referring to great cosmic disturbances, is perfectly in tandem with Revelation judgments, which have "not been from the beginning of the world until now, no and never will be." No doubt there have been great calamities such as the Flood, destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the rise and fall of nations in history, world wars, Jewish massacre by Hitler and Stalin, the recent Tsunami and the 9/11 bombings. These have happened, but they are not *the* "tribulation" referred to in Revelation 6-19 and Matthew 23-24.

We cannot undermine the importance of the future aspect of the Second Coming, the bodily resurrection and the impending future Day of the Lord. It can serve to encourage the believers to live pure, holy and reverent lives before the Lord and before men. It also gives hope in the present time when one goes through difficulties, sufferings and persecutions.

This is what it means to live our lives on the “alert” as Jesus said in Matthew 24:42, where he warned, “Therefore be on the alert for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.”

Therefore, whatever eschatological stand we take, we should do exactly that. Be on the alert—live pure, holy and reverent lives, tell others about Jesus and tell them to do the same!

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Appendix C

Outline of End-Time Events Predicted in the Bible

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament Edition, 1319-1322

- Outline of End-Time Events Predicted in the Bible***
- I. Events Before, During, and After the Seven-Year End-Time Period**
(This seven-year period is the 70th "seven" of Daniel, Dan. 9:27.)
- A. Events immediately before the seven-year period**
(John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thes. 4:16-18; Rev. 3:10)
1. Restraint removed (2 Thes. 2:7)
 2. Judgment seat of Christ (in heaven, 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10)
- B. Events at the beginning of the seven-year period**
1. Antichrist (the coming "ruler") makes a covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:26-27)
 2. Two witnesses begin their ministry (Rev. 11:3)
- C. Events in the first half of the seven-year period**
1. Antichrist rises to power over the Roman confederacy (Dan. 7:20, 24)
 2. Israel living in peace in the land (Ezek. 38:8)
 3. Temple sacrifices instituted (Rev. 11:1-2)
 4. World church dominates religion and the Antichrist (Rev. 17)
- D. Events perhaps just before the middle of the seven-year period**
1. Gog and his allies invade Palestine from the north (Ezek. 38:2, 5-6, 22)
 2. Gog and his allies destroyed by God (Ezek. 38:17-23)
- E. Events at the middle of the seven-year period**
1. Satan cast down from heaven and energizes the Antichrist (Rev. 12:12-17)
 2. Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel, causing her sacrifices to cease (Dan. 9:27)
 3. The 10 kings under the Antichrist destroy the world church (Rev. 17:16-18)
- F. Events of the second half of the seven-year period**
(These three-and-one-half years are called "the Great Tribulation" (Rev. 7:14; cf. "great distress," Matt. 24:21; "time of distress," Dan. 12:1; and "a time of trouble for Jacob," Jer. 30:7)
1. Rebellion (apostasy) against the truth in the professing church (Matt. 24:12; 2 Thes. 2:3)
 2. Antichrist becomes a world ruler (1st seal, Rev. 6:1-2) with support of the Western confederacy (Rev. 13:5, 7; 17:12-13)
 3. Antichrist revealed as "the man of lawlessness," "the lawless one" (2 Thes. 2:3, 8-9)
 4. War, famine, and death (2nd, 3rd, and 4th seals, Rev. 6:3-8)
 5. Converted multitudes from every nation martyred (5th seal, Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-14; Matt. 24:9)
 6. Natural disturbances and worldwide fear of divine wrath (6th seal, Rev. 6:12-17)
 7. Antichrist's image (an "abomination") set up for worship (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-15)
 8. The false prophet promotes the Antichrist, who is worshiped by nations and unbelieving Israel (Matt. 24:11-12; 2 Thes. 2:11; Rev. 13:4, 11-15)
 9. Mark of the beast used to promote worship of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:16-18)
 10. Two witnesses resurrected by Antichrist (Rev. 11:7)
 11. Two witnesses resurrected (Rev. 11:11-12)
 12. Israel scattered because of the anger of Satan (Rev. 12:6, 13-17) and because of the
- G. Events concluding the seven-year period**
1. The king of the South (Egypt) and the king of the North fight against the Antichrist (Dan. 11:40a)
 2. Antichrist enters Palestine and defeats Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia (Dan. 11:40b-43)
 3. Armies from the East and the North move toward Palestine (Dan. 11:44; Rev. 16:12)
 4. Jerusalem is ravaged (Zech. 14:1-4)
 5. Commercial Babylon is destroyed (Rev. 16:19; 18:1-3, 21-24)
 6. Signs appear in the earth and sky (Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15; Matt. 24:29)
 7. Christ returns with the armies of heaven (Matt. 24:27-31; Rev. 19:11-16)
 8. Jews flee Jerusalem facilitated by topographical changes (Zech. 14:5)
 9. Armies unite at Armageddon against Christ and the armies of heaven (Joel 3:9-11; Rev. 16:16; 19:17-19)
 10. Armies are destroyed by Christ (Rev. 19:19, 21)
 11. The "beast" (Antichrist) and the false prophet are thrown
- H. Events following the seven-year period**
1. Final regathering of Israel (Isa. 11:11-12; Jer. 30:3; Ezek. 36:24; 37:1-14; Amos 9:14-15; Micah 4:6-7; Matt. 24:31)
 2. A remnant of Israelites turn to the Lord and are forgiven and cleansed (Hosea 14:1-5; Zech. 12:10; 13:1)
 3. National deliverance of Israel from the Antichrist (Dan. 12:1b; Zech. 12:10; 13:1; Rom. 11:26-27)
 4. Judgment of living Israel (Ezek. 20:33-38; Matt. 25:1-30)
 5. Judgment of lying Gentiles (Matt. 25:31-46)
 6. Satan cast into the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3)
 7. Old Testament saints resurrected (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:1-3)
 8. Tribulation saints resurrected (Rev. 20:4-6)
 9. Daniel 9:24 fulfilled (Rev. 19:7-9)
 10. Marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9)
 11. Christ begins His reign on earth (Ps. 72:8; Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:14-35, 44; 7:13-14; Zech. 9:10; Rev. 20:4)
- II. Characteristics and Events of the Millennium**
- A. Physical characteristics**
1. Topography and geography of the earth changed (Isa. 2:2; Ezek. 47:1-12; 48:8-20; Zech. 14:4, 8, 10)
 2. Wild animals tamed (Isa. 11:6-9; 35:9; Ezek. 34:25)
 3. Crops abundant (Isa. 27:6; 35:1-2, 6-7; Amos 9:13; Zech. 14:8)
 4. Human longevity increased (Isa. 65:20-23)
- B. Spiritual and religious characteristics and events**
1. Satan confined in the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3)
 2. Millennial temple built (Ezek. 40:5-43:27)
 3. Animal sacrifices offered as memorials to Christ's death (Isa. 56:7; 66:20-23;
- "abomination"**
(Antichrist's image) in the temple (Matt. 24:15-26)
13. Jerusalem overrun by Gentiles (Laake 21:24; Rev. 11:2)
 14. Antichrist and false prophets deceive many people (Matt. 24:11; 2 Thes. 2:9-11)
 15. The gospel of the kingdom proclaimed (Matt. 24:14)
 16. Israel persecuted by the Antichrist (Jer. 30:5-7; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8; Matt. 24:21-22)
 17. Trumpet judgments (Rev. 8-9) and bowl judgments (Rev. 16) poured out by God on Antichrist's empire
 18. Blasphemy increases as the judgments intensify (Rev. 16:8-11)
- into the lake of fire**
(Rev. 19:20)
- into the lake of fire**
(Rev. 19:20)
- into the lake of fire**
(Rev. 19:20)

*Though predictions differ on the order of some of these events (see notes at the end of this outline) they do include all these events in the pattern of the end times.

Outline of End-Time Events Predicted in the Bible (continued)

- Jer. 33:17-18;
Ezek. 43:18-27; 45:13-46:24;
Mal. 3:3-4)
4. Feasts of the New Year, Passover, and Tabernacles reinstated (Ezek. 45:18-25; Zech. 14:16-21)
5. Nations worship in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:2, 7:12; Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16-21)
6. Worldwide knowledge of God (Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:34; Micah 4:5; Hab. 2:14)
7. Unparalleled filling of and empowerment by the Holy Spirit on Israel (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 36:24-29; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29)
8. New Covenant with Israel fulfilled (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:25-32)
9. Righteousness and justice prevails (Isa. 9:7; 11:4; 42:1-4; Jer. 23:5)
- C. Political characteristics and events
1. Israel reunited as a nation (Jer. 3:18; Ezek. 37:15-23)
2. Israel at peace in the land (Deut. 30:1-10; Isa. 32:18; Hosea 14:5, 7; Amos 9:15; Micah 4:4; 5:4-5a; Zech. 3:10; 14:11)
3. Abrahamic Covenant land-grant boundaries established (Gen. 15:18-21; Ezek. 47:13-48:8, 23-27)
4. Christ in Jerusalem rules over Israel (Isa. 40:11; Micah 4:7; 5:2b)
5. Davidic Covenant fulfilled (Christ on the throne of David, 2 Sam. 7:11-16; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 33:17-26; Amos 9:11-12; Luke 1:32-33)
6. Christ rules over and judges the nations (Isa. 11:3-5; Micah 4:2-3a; Zech. 14:9; Rev. 19:15)
7. Resurrected saints reign with Christ (Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; 20:6)
8. Universal peace prevails (Isa. 2:4; 32:17-18; 60:18; Hosea 2:18; Micah 4:2-4; 5:4; Zech. 9:10)
9. Jerusalem made the world's capital (Jer. 3:17; Ezek. 48:30-35; Joel 3:16-17;
- Micah 4:1, 6-8; Zech. 8:2-3)
Israel exalted above the Gentiles (Isa. 14:1-2; 49:22-23; 60:14-17; 61:5-9)
11. The world blessed through Israel (Micah 5:7)
D. Events following the Millennium
1. Satan released from the abyss (Rev. 20:7)
2. Satan deceives the nations (Rev. 20:8)
3. Global armies besiege Jerusalem (Rev. 20:9b)
4. Global armies destroyed by fire (Rev. 20:9b)
5. Satan cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10)
6. Evil angels judged (1 Cor. 6:3)
7. The wicked dead resurrected (Dan. 12:2b; John 5:29b)
8. The wicked judged at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-14)
9. The wicked cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8)
- III. Eternity
A. Christ delivers the mediatorial (millennial) kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24)
B. Present heavens and earth demolished (Rev. 21:1)
C. New heavens and new earth created (2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 21:1)
D. New Jerusalem descends to the new earth (Rev. 21:2, 10-27)
E. Christ rules forever in the eternal kingdom (Isa. 9:6-7; Ezek. 37:24-28; Dan. 7:13-14; Luke 1:32-33; Rev. 11:15)
- Notes
1. Some Bible scholars say the work of the two witnesses will be in the second half of the seven-year period.
2. Some identify Antichrist's initial rise to power with the first seal judgment (Rev. 6:1-2)
3. Some place the battle of Gog and his allies at the very middle of the seven-year period; others place it later.
4. Some say the 144,000 will be saved and sealed in the first half of the seven-year period.
5. According to some, this apostasy will begin in the first half of the seven-year period.
6. Many premillennialists place the seal judgments in the first half of the seven-year period.
7. Others suggest that the two witnesses will be slain and resurrected in the first half of the seven-year period.
8. Some equate these events with the battle of Gog and his allies.

Source : *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament Ed. pp. B39-132.*

Appendix D

HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

THE POST-APOSTOLIC PERIOD

For at least the first one hundred years after John wrote the *Book of Revelation*, what evidence we have from the post-apostolic period indicates that the church leaders were clearly premillennial in their perspective. They expected the Lord to return soon, accompanied by a resurrection of believers, a rebuilding of Jerusalem, a thousand-year earthly reign, and then a general resurrection and judgment.

A. Justin Martyr (ca. AD 100–165)

One of the earliest references to the Book of Revelation comes from Justin Martyr, a Christian apologist of the second century AD who sought to defend the Christian faith against misrepresentation and ridicule. According to Carey, Justin was born in the region of Shechem (near modern-day Nablus), and was converted to Christianity about AD 132.⁸¹

His reference to Revelation occurs in his work entitled *Dialogue with Trypho* (an apologetic work to a Jew by the name of Trypho). According to Chadwick, this was written sometime near the middle of the second century: “The *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* was written after the first *Apology*, probably about 160, but is presented as an account of a discussion which Justin had with Trypho about 135.”⁸²

Since Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed in AD 70, Justin asked Trypho if he believed the city would be rebuilt. He then went on to explain that it would be rebuilt during the 1000-year millennium:

But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.⁸³

Then, Justin connects this belief to John’s writing in Revelation:

And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.

Justin had not been the first post-apostolic father to espouse a premillennial belief. This was clearly attested by Papias (ca. AD 60-130), but Justin makes a clear

⁸¹ J. D. Douglas, ed. *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), s.v. “Justin Martyr,” by G. L. Carey.

⁸² Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (London: Cox & Wyman Ltd, 1967), 75.

⁸³ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho, A Jew* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1867; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 239.

reference to the Book of Revelation (see notes on the *Historical Background* for Papias).

B. Irenaeus (ca. AD 120–202)

Irenaeus made numerous references to the Book of Revelation, though apparently did not write a commentary on it. In his work *Against Heresies*, he clearly articulated an earthly millennial kingdom of 1000 years that would come about after the rule of the Antichrist. Furthermore, this kingdom would be set up in a renewed Jerusalem.

He equates the *beast* of Rev 13 with the “little horn” of Daniel 7, both referring to the Antichrist that will rule in the end times (V.28.2).⁸⁴ Furthermore, he understood the “time, times and half a time” as a 3 ½ year period: “and [everything] shall be given into his hand until a time of times and a half time,’ that is, for three years and six months, during which time, when he comes, he shall reign over the earth” (V.25.3). He held that the present kingdom [i.e., Rome] would eventually be divided into ten kings, according to the prophecies of Dan 2 and 7 (V.26.1). He also stated that the number 666 was the correct reading according to the better copies of Revelation then circulating:

Such, then, being the state of the case, and this number being found in all the most approved and ancient copies [of the Apocalypse], and those men who saw John face to face bearing their testimony [to it].⁸⁵

According to Irenaeus, the rule of the Antichrist would be terminated by the Lord’s return, following which there would be the kingdom:

But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that ‘many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’⁸⁶

Furthermore, Irenaeus contended vigorously that the kingdom should be in the same earthly sphere in which the people of God had experienced their earthly life. He argues that heretics are

. . . ignorant of God’s dispensations, and of the mystery of the resurrection of the just, and of the [earthly] kingdom which is the commencement of incorruption, by means of which kingdom those who shall be worthy are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature; and it is necessary to tell them respecting these things, that it behooves the righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God in this creation which is renovated, and that the judgment should take place afterwards. For it is just that in that very creation in which they toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that in the creation in which they were slain because of their love to God, in that they

⁸⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, 554.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 558 [from V.30.1].

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 560 [from V.30.4].

should be revived again; and that in the creation in which they endured servitude, in that they should reign.⁸⁷

Irenaeus not only claims that the kingdom will follow the Second Coming and consist of a rejuvenated earth, but he claims that this was the tradition that had been passed down from John himself:

The predicted blessing, therefore, belongs unquestionably to the times of the kingdom, when the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead; when also the creation, having been renovated and set free, shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven, and from the fertility of the earth; as the elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, related that they had heard from him how the Lord used to teach in regard to these things.⁸⁸

In support of this contention, Irenaeus refers to the teachings of Papias to the same effect: “And these things are borne witness to in writing by Papias, the hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp, in his fourth book; for there were five books compiled . . . by him.”⁸⁹

For Irenaeus, the expression “resurrection of the just” refers to this earthly kingdom period when God’s people will be resurrected to enjoy the time of blessing. He does not state clearly when this resurrection itself occurs. Of quite some interest, however, are his comments to the effect that those who survived the Tribulation would go into the kingdom in their natural physical bodies. This seems to suggest that he did not hold to a post-tribulational view of the rapture:

For all these and other words were unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of Antichrist, and the destruction of all nations under his rule; in [the times of] which [resurrection] the righteous shall reign in the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord; and through him they shall become accustomed to partake in the glory of God the Father, and shall enjoy in the kingdom intercourse and communion with the holy angels, and union with spiritual beings; and [with respect to] those whom the Lord shall find in the flesh, awaiting him from heaven, and who have suffered tribulation, as well as escaped the hands of the Wicked one. For it is in reference to them that the prophet says: ‘And those that are left shall multiply upon the earth.’ And Jeremiah the prophet has pointed out, that as many believers as God has prepared for this purpose, to multiply those left upon the earth, should both be under the rule of the saints to minister to this Jerusalem, and that [His] kingdom shall be in it . . .⁹⁰

Finally, Irenaeus discusses the New Jerusalem and the relation of the millennial kingdom to the new creation. He held that the millennial kingdom was something of a *training period* in preparation for the “new heavens and new earth.” He states,

When these things, therefore, pass away above the earth, John, the Lord’s disciple, says that the new Jerusalem above shall [then] descend, as a bride adorned for her husband; . . . Of this Jerusalem the former one is an image—that Jerusalem of the former earth in which the righteous are disciplined

⁸⁷ Ibid., 561 [from V.32.1].

⁸⁸ Ibid., 562-63 [from V.33.3].

⁸⁹ Ibid., 563 [from V.33.4].

⁹⁰ Ibid., 565 [from V.35.1]. The latter reference to Jeremiah is actually to the book of Baruch (the scribe of Jeremiah). Irenaeus goes on to quote from Baruch 4:36–5:9.

beforehand for incorruption and prepared for salvation And as he rises actually, so also shall he be actually disciplined beforehand for incorruption, and shall go forwards and flourish in the times of the kingdom, in order that he may be capable of receiving the glory of the Father. Then, when all things are made new, he shall truly dwell in the city of God.⁹¹

C. Hippolytus (d. ca. AD 236)

Hippolytus served as a presbyter and teacher in the church at Rome. He wrote a commentary on Daniel, and was also a premillennialist. However, he anticipated the millennium in the year AD 500. He identified the beast of Rev 13 as arising from the fourth beast of Dan 7 (i.e., the Roman Empire). The Antichrist would rule for 3 ½ years, but the number 666 would not be understood until the future. He seems to have understood the great harlot and Babylon as Rome.

D. Victorinus (d. ca. AD 303)

Victorinus was a bishop of Pettau, near Vienne. He is noteworthy, in that his commentary on Revelation is one of the earliest extant commentaries to survive. Being influenced by Papias, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus, he understood Revelation in a literal, chiliastic sense (premillennial).⁹² He held that the Antichrist would persecute the church, and hence the woman fleeing into the wilderness symbolizes believers fleeing from the hosts of Antichrist. The second beast in Rev 13 would set up an image of the Antichrist in the temple at Jerusalem. Victorinus's work is noteworthy for its record of two significant interpretative features:

1. His commentary is the first (at least that we have record of) to espouse the *Nero redivivus* theory, i.e., that Nero would return from the dead as the 8th king and the Antichrist (thought to be near at hand).
2. He articulated a recapitulation view of the trumpet and bowl judgments, i.e., that the bowls do not follow the trumpets in a continuous series, but are parallel with them and recapitulate them in another form.

Victorinus thought that the persecutions of his own day belonged to the *sixth seal*, and that the seventh seal would usher in the *End*.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA

Despite some continuing witness to the literal millennial kingdom view beyond the second century AD, the rise of the school of Alexandria towards the end of the second century was beginning to influence the interpretation of Scripture, including the prophetic portions (see notes in Appendix B on *Eschatological Systems*). The key factor was a shift from a basically literal hermeneutic to an allegorizing method. The most influential person connected with the school of Alexandria was Origen (who had been influenced by Clement of Alexandria).⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid., 566 [from V.35.2].

⁹² Apparently, there is some discrepancy concerning Victorinus, although he does appear to have been premillennial. Gregg states, "Victorinus' commentary followed the allegorizing approach. It appears that Augustinian editors may have altered it, however, because in its present form it champions *amillennialism*, whereas Jerome (c. 345-420) listed Victorinus with Tertullian and Lactantius as a *chiliast* (that is, a premillennialist) [*Revelation: Four Views*, 30].

⁹³ Concerning Clement's spiritualizing views of Revelation, Swete states, "Thus Clement sees in the four and twenty Elders a symbol of the equality of Jew and Gentile within the Christian Church; in the tails of the locusts of the Abyss, the mischievous influence of immoral teachers; in the many-coloured foundation stones of the City of God, the manifold grace of Apostolic teaching" (Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 3rd ed. [London: Macmillan, 1911; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Pub., 1977], ccviii).

A. Origen (ca. 185 – ca. 254)

Prior to Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215), the post-apostolic fathers (in general) expected the soon return of the Lord to establish an earthly messianic kingdom. The delay of the *parousia* combined with the influence of Greek thought and the earlier writings of Philo led to non-literal views of the prophecies. Origen was vehemently opposed to the literal millennial views of the second century fathers. Although Origen did not write a commentary on Revelation, his views on it can be gleaned from his many writings. According to Origen, the mysteries of Revelation can only be understood by looking to the *spiritual sense*. Beckwith summarizes his views:

At a definite period the Lord will come, not visibly, but in spirit, and establish his perfected kingdom on earth. The time of his advent will coincide with the coming culmination of evil in the person of Antichrist, a future world-ruler, a child of Satan. The imagery of the visions is to be taken allegorically; for example, the seven heads of the dragon are seven deadly sins, the ten horns are serpent-like powers of sin which assail the inner life, the roll with seven seals is the Scriptures, whose meaning Christ alone can unseal;⁹⁴

B. Methodius (d. ca. AD 311)

Methodius (a bishop in Lycia), despite his attacks on Origen on certain doctrinal issues, followed the spiritualizing procedure of Origen. In general, the visions were to be taken allegorically. For example, the woman with child is the Church bearing children into spiritual life, and she is removed from the assaults of the devil (since the true life of these is with the Spirit in heaven).⁹⁵ The beast is a symbol of *fleshly lust*.

C. Tyconius (fl. ca. AD 370–390)

Tyconius is known to have written his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (which only survives in citations from the works of others). His views, however, are partially influenced by the struggles of his day. Tyconius was himself aligned with the Donatists who were regarded as heretics by the Catholic Church. Thus, Tyconius (as other Donatists) regarded themselves as the true church which was being persecuted by the Satanic powers foretold in Revelation (for them, the Catholic hierarchy supported by the world-power). His method is thoroughly spiritualizing. For him, the millennial reign is realized in the Church, between the first coming of Christ and the second. Jerusalem symbolizes the Church, whereas Babylon symbolizes the antichristian world. He also adopted the recapitulation theory.

D. Augustine (AD 354–430)

Augustine was significantly influenced by Tyconius, despite his own efforts to avoid the “heresies” of the Donatists. This influence stemmed not just from Tyconius’s *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, but from another work by Tyconius entitled *Book of Rules*. The latter was the first Latin essay in hermeneutics, in which Tyconius presented seven keys to spiritual exegesis. In fact, Augustine’s elaboration of this in his own work (*On Christian Instruction*, 3:30:42-37:56) helped to ensure that Tyconius had a wide influence. As a result, Augustine adopted Tyconius’s

⁹⁴ Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (London: The MacMillan Company, 1919; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 323.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

spiritualizing method as well as his preference for the recapitulation theory (the latter includes the idea that Rev 20 is a recapitulation of the period leading up to the 2nd Advent, not a chronologically successive period). Like Tyconius, Augustine held the view that the millennial reign was represented by the period between the two comings of Christ. What is noteworthy here is not so much Augustine's originality of these views, but the fact that he was the more influential writer (and hence, did more to propagate these views). Augustine did not write a commentary on Revelation, but his interpretations on parts of it are reflected in his writings (especially *The City of God*, 20, 7 ff.).

Follow-up note: The expectation of a future millennial kingdom was still affirmed as late as the Council of Nicea in AD 325. At the Council of Ephesus in AD 431, however, the belief in the millennium was declared to be superstitious.

III. FROM 500 TO 1000 AD

Most of this period is characterized by the influence of Tyconius and Augustine in favor of the spiritualizing method (with an occasional follower after the literal method of Victorinus). With the approach of the year 1000, chiliastic expectations did resurface. Tyconius's views were perpetrated in the east through the commentary of Andreas, and in the west through that of Primasius.

A. Andreas (6th cent. AD)

Andreas (bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia) is best known for his Greek commentary which relied on the spiritualizing method of interpretation for the most part. Beckwith highlights his views:

The kingdom of 1000 years, as with Ticonius and Augustine, begins with Christ's earthly life and will continue till the knowledge of him is everywhere extended, the number of years being symbolical of completeness and multitude. The first resurrection is the believer's rising from spiritual death; Babylon represents, not Rome, but the sum of the world-powers; the temple is the Christian Church.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, he did hold that an Antichrist would arise, though he rejected the association with the wounded head of Nero. He held that the first five seals were already past, though the remainder of judgments pertained to the future. He held that the seven kings (17:10) were seven embodiments of the world power, the sixth being Rome and the seventh Constantinople.

B. Primasius (6th cent. AD)

Primasius was bishop at Hadrumetum in N. Africa, and wrote a commentary on Revelation prior to AD 543-44. If for no other reason, his commentary is important for preserving almost completely the African Latin text of Revelation. He was strongly influenced and reliant upon the views of Tyconius and Augustine (which he acknowledges in his preface). There are, however, a few points when he departs from the spiritualizing method to adopt a realistic interpretation (e.g., the Antichrist will be a person who comes out of the tribe of Dan).

⁹⁶ Ibid., 325.

C. Berengaudus (9th cent. AD)

His main contribution was to see the judgment series as extending over broad sweeps of time. Beckwith (p 326) writes,

He interprets the first six seals as covering the time from Adam to the rejection of the Jews in the fall of Jerusalem; the first six trumpets are the preachers sent by God from the beginning of biblical history down to the latest defenders of the Church, the seventh trumpet represents the preachers who will come in the time of Antichrist; the horns of the beast are the barbarian tribes who destroyed the Roman empire.

Perhaps his approach paved the way for the later methodology that saw in Revelation a broad sweep of church history and the world.

IV. FROM AD 1000 TO THE REFORMATION

The approach of the year AD 1000 brought with it a heightened sense of expectation. Though Augustine had taken the “1000 years” as symbolic of an *indefinite period*, there were many who held that though the millennium represented the period between the two comings of Christ, it was a thousand year interval. Beckwith (p 327) explains the significance in relation to the approach and passing of AD 1000:

From the time of Ticonius and Augustine it had been a belief, nearly universal, that the kingdom of the thousand years began with the earthly appearance of Christ, or with his resurrection and ascension; Satan had been ‘bound,’ that is, his power had been in part restrained, but he was not destroyed, Antichrist and antichristian powers were still at work constantly in the world; at the end of the millennial period a final manifestation of evil in personal form would take place, with all its enmity toward the Church. Therefore as the ten centuries neared their end, a general unrest and fear seized society. Satan was about to be loosed for the last great conflict, the time of dread persecution was at hand, after which would come the judgment and the end of the world. The critical period however passed by, neither Antichrist nor the Lord appeared, nothing occurred in the experience of the Church or the world in which Christians could see their expectations and fears realized. This undisturbed passage of the time of expected crisis produced first of all a change of view in regard to the meaning of the thousand years. Augustine centuries before had taken it as symbolical of an indefinite period, and this understanding of it now became general.

A. Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202)

Joachim was a Cistercian monk in Italy. Clouse introduces him this way:

He recorded two mystical experiences, which gave him the gift of spiritual intelligence enabling him to understand the inner meaning of history. At times he prophesied on contemporary events and the advent of Antichrist. He also meditated deeply on the two great menaces to Christianity, the infidel and the heretic.⁹⁷

One of his published works was entitled *Exposition of the Apocalypse*. Joachim, as with others, vainly attempted to read prophetic expectations into his own time era. Believing that the New Testament period of grace would last for 42 generations of thirty years each, he was looking for a new age of the Spirit to begin in the year AD

⁹⁷ J. D. Douglas, ed. *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Rev ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1978), s.v. “Joachim of Fiore,” by Robert G. Clouse.

1260 which would see a rise in new religious orders that would convert the world. Thus, for Joachim, the millennium was conceived of as future, but not of a literal thousand years.⁹⁸ Joachim saw this near-approaching time of bliss to be realized in perfected monasticism, an idea that gave a fresh spark of life and zeal to monks.

At times the Beast represents the Devil, but at other times the Beast is Mohammedism. The deadly wound is that which Islam suffered in the Crusades, but nevertheless survived and recovered from. The false prophet represented the heretics which plagued the church. Although he accepted the legitimacy of the papacy, he attacked the general worldliness that had crept into the church (which could be restored through monasticism).

Joachim's influence continued after his death, both through his writings and those pseudonymously attributed to him. The Franciscans, in particular, held him in high esteem and considered him a prophet. Consequently, many held to the idea that the church was living in the *last days*. The Book of Revelation was thus used to foster the idea of reformation within the church. In the ensuing years, the cries of reformation within the church led to an attack upon the Pope himself (in contrast to Joachim's support of the papacy). So, the Beast was understood to refer to the Pope (the Antichrist), and the Roman Catholic Church was the woman sitting on the Beast (Rev 17). Keep in mind that this notion *predated* the Reformation itself!

B. Nicholas of Lyra (ca. 1265–1349)

One of the other influential figures prior to the Reformation was Nicholas of Lyra, a Franciscan scholar who studied theology at Paris (ca. 1308). Norman describes him as departing from the general allegorical tendency: "The best-equipped biblical scholar of the Middle Ages, knowing Hebrew and acquainted with Jewish commentaries, notably Rashi, he was especially concerned to expound the literal sense of Scripture as against the current allegorical interpretation."⁹⁹ In regard to Revelation, Nicholas set a whole new course for interpreting the book, one which influenced many generations. In his view, the Book of Revelation was meant to portray all of church history from the apostolic era until the final consummation (progressively fulfilled throughout church history). He claimed to find references to such events as the rise and spread of Islam, Charlemagne, and the Crusades. However, he felt that the millennium (which began with the founding of the Mendicant orders) was already present, and anticipated that Satan would be released and return again before the complete end of history. Nicholas's idea that Revelation portrayed the whole general sweep of church history (the historicist approach) was to have a significant influence on later commentators, particularly those of the Reformation (including Martin Luther!).

⁹⁸ Regarding Joachim's views, Swete (ccxii) adds, "Of the seven heads of the Beast the fifth is the Emperor Frederick I., and the sixth Saladin; the seventh is Antichrist; the destruction of Antichrist will be followed by the millennium, which thus recovers its place as a hope of the future."

⁹⁹ J. G. G. Norman, "Nicholas of Lyra," *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978).

V. FROM THE REFORMATION THROUGH THE 18TH CENTURY AD

We cannot say that the historicist approach was the only one of this period, but it was certainly the dominant one of those outside the Catholic Church. The rise of the *literary-critical* school of thought, however, in the 18th century (with its attack upon the inerrancy of Scripture) provided alternative views to Revelation.

A. The Historicist Approach of the Reformation (continuous-historical)

For Luther and other Reformers, the historicist approach was widely adopted. In their attack upon the Catholic Church, the Beast was readily seen as the Pope and the woman sitting on the Beast as the Roman Catholic Church (Rev 17). In contrast, the Catholic Church viewed Luther and the other Reformers as the Antichrist, and the various Protestant sects as the False Prophet.

Though viewing the book as a panoramic sweep of church history, the interpretation of details would vary from one commentator to the next. Each generation seemed to find particular reference to events and persons of its own age (from Constantine to Napoleon). The historicist approach (made famous by Luther) was embraced by such notables as John Wycliffe, John Knox, William Tyndale, Ulrich Zwingli, Philip Melancthon, Sir Isaac Newton, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, C. H. Spurgeon, Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke, J. A. Bengel, and Joseph Mede. It has even continued into the 19th century through the works of men like Albert Barnes (1798-1870; Presbyterian minister and author of *Barnes Notes*), E. B. Elliott (*Horae Apocalypticae*, 1847), and A. J. Gordon (1836-1895; editor of the *Watchword* monthly periodical which focused on prophecy). Despite this list of prominent evangelical Protestant leaders who took the historicist approach, it is almost totally abandoned today by contemporary commentators.

Despite a common embracing of the historicist approach, commentators would differ on details. Some would take the recapitulation theory of the judgment cycles (that the trumpets and bowls essentially repeated the judgments of the seals), while others would view the cycles as one long unfolding of church history. Throughout this period, date setting for the time of the end continued to be practiced, often utilizing the "year-for-a-day" principle.¹⁰⁰ This was particularly true as dramatic moments of history were faced, especially throughout the 1700's and leading up to the French Revolution (as well as the advent of Napoleon).

B. Roman Catholic Approaches

In an attempt to counter the historicist approaches that focused upon attacking the Catholicism and the Pope, certain Catholic commentators provided alternatives.

¹⁰⁰ According to the "year-for-a-day" principle, advocates hold that the dates mentioned in both Daniel and Revelation are symbolic (often taking a day to mean a year). Gregg explains,

"On this principle, five months (150 days) is taken to designate 150 years. The significant period of 1260 days is interpreted as the same number of years. 'An hour, and a day, and a month, and a year' becomes (depending on whether a year is 360 days or 365 days) 391 years and 15 days, or 396 years and 106 days.

In support of this procedure, appeal is made to Ezekiel 4:4-6, in which the prophet was required to lie on his left side for 390 days, and upon his right side for 40 days, representing the same number of years of judgment decreed upon Israel and Judah respectively" (Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views*, 34-5).

1. Franciscus Ribeira (1537–1591)

A Spanish Jesuit and professor at Salamanca by the name of Ribeira (having a knowledge of both Greek and Latin commentators of the patristic period) published a commentary in the late 16th century.¹⁰¹ In contrast to the historicist approaches, Ribeira stressed that most of the book had its fulfillment in John's near future or would be fulfilled in the *end-times*. Although he related the first five seals to a past age (from the Apostles to the persecution under Trajan), the rest of the book (beginning with the 6th seal) awaited the Last Days. Thus, he eliminated the speculative tendency of trying to relate various events of church history to details in Revelation. Of even more significance, he shifted the interpretation of the beast as the Pope to an individual yet to come in the future.

2. Luiz de Alcazar (1554–1613)

Another Spanish Jesuit named Alcazar (whose commentary was published in 1614) took a very different approach than Ribeira, in which he interpreted most of the book from a preterist view. Only the final chapters, 20–22, looked to the future. His system involved a division of chapters 4–22 into three parts:

- a. Ch 4–11 — This section supposedly depicts the church's struggle against Judaism, which culminated in the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.
- b. Ch 12–19 — This section depicts the church's struggle with paganism (along with Judaism), ending with the fall of Rome in AD 476.
- c. Ch 20–22 — Based on the assumption that the "1000 years" represents an indefinite period *during the present age*, Alcazar held that these chapters predict the "victory" of the church which began with Constantine and would continue on until the end of the world (for him, a triumph of the church as represented by Catholicism).

In one way, Alcazar's scheme is a type of historicist approach, with the book surveying the progress of the gospel throughout history. However, since most of this is correlated with church history prior to AD 476, it is basically preterist. One of the novelties in his interpretation is to identify the "strong angel" who binds Satan as Constantine. We should also observe that his approach basically eliminates any future tribulation or a future Antichrist. Although differing significantly from Ribeira's approach, both schemes were aimed at the same goal: countering the attack upon Catholicism by Protestants who followed the mainline historicist approach. Alcazar's model served to pave the way for later interpreters who followed a preterist approach of interpreting the book in light of the first few centuries when Imperial Rome persecuted Christianity.

¹⁰¹ F. Ribeira, *Commentarius in sacram b. Ioannis Apoc.* (Salamanca, 1591).

VI. DEVELOPMENTS OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES AD

The past two centuries have seen anything but uniformity in approach to the Book of Revelation. Although there has been a shift away from the historicist approach of the Reformation and early post-reformation period, the past two centuries have witnessed the rise of the preterist approach, the "spiritual" approach, and the futurist approach. The latter approach, understanding the bulk of chaps. 4–20 as events waiting to be fulfilled in the future is the dominant approach today (though interpreters will do so in different ways according to their own eschatological grid).

A. The Rise of the Preterist School of Approach (contemporary-historical)

1. Early Forerunners of the Preterist Approach

Representatives of the preterist approach are primarily found in the past two centuries, and hence my reason for placing the discussion here. Having said that, however, traces of the preterist approach can be found much earlier. This was witnessed as early as the 6th century when Andreas of Cappadocia (though not a preterist himself) made mention in his commentary on Revelation of those of whom he was aware that understood the judgments as applying to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in AD 70.¹⁰² Further impetus was provided by Alcazar's *interpretative scheme* (AD 1614) in which chapters 4–19 were assigned a fulfillment prior to AD 476.

Most Protestant scholars resisted alcazar's approach after the Reformation, who continued to see the Beast as a reference to the Pope and the harlot as Catholicism. In 1644, however, a Dutch Protestant named Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) wrote a commentary on Revelation that was strongly influenced by the Catholic Alcazar. He generally agreed with Alcazar's three-fold division of Revelation, but with modification to allow more correlation with the events of Constantine's day and latter events in church history. His work is significant for at least three reasons: (1) as a Protestant, his acceptance of Alcazar's basic model paved the way for other Protestant scholars to embrace a preterist approach; (2) he was one of the first Reformed exegetes to abandon the identification of the pope as the Beast; and (3) he was one of the first to call into question the *unity* of the book (thus pioneering the literary-critical approach to Revelation).

For the main, however, the preterist approach has had its strongest following in more recent times, though from three different camps: (1) critical scholars; (2) conservatives; and (3) reconstructionists. Preterists usually argue for their position on the advantage that it would be most relevant to the original audience. Furthermore, they would claim that internal notes about a *soon coming* are best understood from a preterist position. Furthermore, the instructions to John to "not seal up the book" in Rev 22:10 seem to be deliberately contrasted with the instructions to Daniel to "seal up the book" (Dan 12:9). Advocates argue that this indicates an expectation of a fulfillment in the near future.

¹⁰² For citations, see Kenneth Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 107. Another commentator by the name of Arethas, writing sometime in either the 6th or 9th century, held a similar view.

2. Critical Scholars

Johann Eichhorn (1752–1827)

Eichhorn was a noted German critical scholar whose liberal views gained him a reputation as the "father of Old Testament criticism." In 1791 he advanced a theory that the book of Revelation represented "a great historic poem picturing in dramatic form the victory of Christianity over Judaism and heathenism, symbolized respectively in Jerusalem and Rome."¹⁰³ As a noted scholar, Eichhorn's *dramatic approach* (with acts and scenes depicting the progress and victory of the Christian faith) influenced others to approach the book primarily in terms of what it meant for the original writer and his readers.

Other critical studies have stressed the examination of Revelation in light of other apocalyptic literature from before and during the first century, as well as assessing the unity and redaction of the book.¹⁰⁴ The outcome of the work of critical scholars, however, has been the view that John wrote with an expectation that there would be a vindication of Christianity *in the relatively near future*, but that this failed to materialize (and hence, that John was mistaken). Critical scholars following the preterist approach include R. H. Charles (in the *ICC* series) and J. M. Ford (*Anchor Bible Commentary*).

3. Conservative Scholars Following the Preterist Approach

There were other scholars who approached the book from a basically preterist position, but who held to the inspiration of Scripture and did not deny the unity of the book. Representatives would include Moses Stuart (writing in 1845), J. Russell Stewart (1887), Milton Terry (1898) and Henry Barclay Swete, whose third edition of his *Commentary on Revelation* appeared in 1911.¹⁰⁵ Swete held that the book was written in the latter part of Domitian's reign, and was written primarily for John's own time (although he also combined this with the *spiritual approach*). Thus, the significance of the book is primarily for the early church, as that is where most of the fulfillment lies. Gregg points out some of the advantages to this approach:

This view has the advantage of immediate relevance to the original readers, a feature we would strongly expect to find in an epistle. It also is the only view that does not need an alternative to the literal sense of passages like Revelation 1:1 and 19, which affirm that the events predicted "must shortly come to pass" and "are about to take place"; and like Revelation 22:10, where John is told *not* to seal up the book, because "the time is at hand."¹⁰⁶

Several who have written from a preterist approach have combined this with the spiritual approach (e.g., Swete, and Albertus Pieters).¹⁰⁷ There are not many writings from this perspective in recent years, but modern-day examples

¹⁰³ Beckwith, 333.

¹⁰⁴ One of the more significant early works to focus on the matter of apocalyptic literature was that of Lucke (*Einleitung in d. Offenbar. d. Johan.*, 2d ed., 1852).

¹⁰⁵ Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 2 vols (Andover, Mass.: Allen, 1845); J. Stewart Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of our Lord's Second Coming* (1887; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983); Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics: A Study of the Most Notable Revelations of God and of Christ in the Canonical Scriptures* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1898; and Henry B. Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1911).

¹⁰⁶ Gregg, 38.

¹⁰⁷ Albertus Pieters, *The Lamb, the Woman, and the Dragon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1937).

can be found in Morris Ashcraft and Jay Adams.¹⁰⁸ More recently, amillennialist teacher R. C. Sproul has taken a preterist approach, viewing the events of Matthew 24 as fulfilled in AD 70.¹⁰⁹

4. Christian Reconstructionists (Dominion Theology)

Over the last three decades, a modern form of postmillennialism has arisen as advocated by those known as *Christian Reconstructionists*.¹¹⁰ This modern movement has called for an imposition of Old Testament Law upon modern society at large (not just the Christian community!). Postmillennialism is an essential part of their theology, as they believe that society can and will become Christian (a glorious age!) as God's laws (including those of the Mosaic covenant) are applied to all of society. Hence, there is no room in their theology for an ungodly political system led by Antichrist that will be overthrown by the personal return of Jesus Christ. They alleviate the difficulties that Revelation would present to their system by relegating the fulfillment details to the first century AD with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This has been reflected in the writings of David Chilton, Gary DeMar, and Kenneth Gentry.¹¹¹ In contrast to earlier preterists, reconstructionists argue for an early date of writing in order to connect the details of the book with the events leading up to AD 70.

B. The Spiritual Approach (or Idealist; Symbolic)

This approach avoids the difficulties of historical correlation by looking for *spiritual lessons* or *principles* in the story. Such interpreters avoid identification of specific individuals or events in history. Thus the meaning of John's visions is to be spiritually understood. Gregg describes the results of the spiritual approach:

According to this view, the great themes of the triumph of good over evil, of Christ over Satan, of the vindication of the martyrs and the sovereignty of God are played out throughout Revelation without necessary reference to single historical events. The battles in Revelation may be seen as referring to spiritual warfare, to the persecution of Christians, or to natural warfare in general throughout history. The beast from the sea may be identified as the satanically inspired political opposition to the church in any age, and the beast from the land as the opposition of pagan or corrupt religion to Christianity.¹¹²

This approach was seen as early as William Milligan whose commentary, *The Book of Revelation*, was published in London in 1889. It has been adapted and utilized by both liberal and conservative scholars. Sometimes, this would even be blended with the preterist approach.¹¹³ William Hendriksen's 1939 work, *More Than Conquerors*,

¹⁰⁸ Morris Ashcraft, *Hebrews–Revelation*, in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, ed. Clifton J. Allen, vol 12 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972); and Jay Adams, *The Time is at Hand* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1966).

¹⁰⁹ R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998).

¹¹⁰ For a helpful description and analysis of this movement, see H. Wayne House and Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1988). Early leaders of this movement have been R. J. Rushdoony, Gary North, and Greg Bahnsen.

¹¹¹ A couple of the more noteworthy attempts at explaining eschatology from a reconstructionist view have been David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: An Eschatology of Dominion* (Tyler, TX: Reconstruction Press, 1985); *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Fort Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987); and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation: An Exegetical and Historical Argument for a pre-AD 70 Composition* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

¹¹² Gregg, 43.

¹¹³ Examples of a blending of late-date preterist and spiritual approaches are seen in H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (New York: Macmillan, 1906); and Ray Summers, *Worthy Is the Lamb: An Interpretation of Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1951).

is essentially a *spiritual approach*, though he combines other approaches as well (e.g., the preterist and historical). He sees seven segments to the book that parallel one another, each of which concerns the entire church age.¹¹⁴ However, he asserts that the goal is not specific identification of persons and events but of *principles*. More recently, some form of blended approach involving the *spiritual* has been followed in commentaries by Leon Morris and Michael Wilcock.¹¹⁵ Sam Hamstra summarizes and defends the idealist view in *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*.¹¹⁶

No doubt the best proponent of the idealist approach is Gregory Beale.¹¹⁷ His monumental work of over 1200 pages was published in 1999 and draws parallels from the Old Testament to the suffering of the church of all ages. No major work responding to him and especially based on the Greek text like his work has been widely accepted to date.

C. The Futurist Approach

Most contemporary evangelical scholars hold to some form of the *futurist approach*, in which chapters 4–22 are to be fulfilled at some future point (they are future events to both John's day and most of church history). Dispensational writers have popularized this, though they are not the only ones to take the futurist approach (i.e., one could subscribe to a futurist approach without being dispensational). We could suggest at least three different variations of the futurist approach:

- 1) Premillennial – Dispensational
 - 2) Premillennial – Non-Dispensational
 - 3) Amillennial
1. Dispensationalists hold that the church will be raptured prior to the tribulation and will not experience these judgments (hence, a rapture prior to Rev 4). [But there are exceptions—see below]. Dispensationalists would also see the references in the book to Israel literally (hence, the woman in chapter 12 is Israel, and Jews will be persecuted by the Antichrist during the tribulation). Since dispensationalists are also premillennialists, they would take the 1000-year reign in Revelation literally and equate this with the earthly millennium. Though there are certainly variations of opinion among dispensationalists on the details of the book, those who take this general approach have included J. N. Darby, C. I. Scofield (*The Scofield Reference Bible*), Clarence Larkin, Charles Ryrie, J. Dwight Pentecost, John Walvoord, Hal Lindsey, and Robert Thomas.

More recently, C. Marvin Pate has attempted to espouse and defend a "progressive dispensationalist" approach to Revelation by applying an "already–not yet" hermeneutic.¹¹⁸ According to Pate, there is an initial and partial fulfillment with ancient Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70, but also a future and more complete fulfillment yet to come in the Tribulation before the Second

¹¹⁴ Such a structural understanding of the book was not new. A similar approach had been advocated earlier by R. C. H. Lenski (*The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* [Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935]), and Charles R. Eerdman (*The Revelation of John* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1936]).

¹¹⁵ Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969); and Michael Wilcock, *I Saw Heaven Opened: The Message of Revelation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975).

¹¹⁶ C. Marvin Pate, ed., *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1998).

¹¹⁷ Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1999).

¹¹⁸ Pate, *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 135-75.

Coming. He sees the Beast as the Imperial Cult of Rome (as a partial fulfillment in the past), but also as a future antichrist. While it is true that dispensationalists in general (including most progressive dispensationalists) hold to a pre-trib view of the rapture, there are some progressive dispensationalists that embrace the post-trib rapture view. [Though some might question whether the latter are really dispensationalists, they can still be said to be in the *dispensational camp* on account of their views about the future of Israel].

2. Non-dispensational premillennialists reject the idea of a pretribulational rapture, and thus view the church as passing through the tribulation. Following the second coming, there will be a millennial period. Some, like George Ladd, hold to a literal 1000-year millennium (just as the dispensationalists). Others might hold to a millennium, but not necessarily for it being a thousand years in duration (see Alan Johnson in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*). There are two general views of the rapture by non-dispensational premillennialists: the prewrath view and the post-trib view.¹¹⁹ The latter is generally referred to as "historic premillennialism."¹²⁰
3. Some amillennialists (not all!) have taken a generally futurist approach (e.g., I. T. Beckwith, 1919). They would hold to a literal tribulation period on earth in which the Antichrist would be present. Following the Second Coming, however, there would not be an earthly millennium. Thus, when they come to Rev 20, they would view this differently than premillennialists. For Hoekema (*The Bible and the Future*), this is a depiction of the entire age between the 1st and 2nd comings of Christ (he obviously spiritualizes the number 1000).

Although examples of the futurist approach can be found prior to the 19th century, it was primarily the writings of John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren movement beginning around 1830 that began to popularize this approach.¹²¹ By the latter part of the century, the Bible Conference movement (beginning about 1876) did even more to establish the futurist approach. Two significant works in the year 1909 gave further impetus to this approach. The first was J. A. Seiss's *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, and the second was the publication of the *Scofield Reference Bible*. This approach continued to spread to the masses through the establishment of such schools as Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary. The publication of Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* in 1970 (over 20 million copies sold!), despite some extremes in interpretation, brought the futurist approach to the forefront of American evangelicalism.

¹¹⁹ For an up-to-date treatment of these rapture views, see *Three Views on The Rapture*, Rev ed., ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Zondervan, 2010). In this work, Alan Hultberg argues the prewrath rapture view, Douglas Moo the posttrib view, and Craig Blaising the pretrib view.

¹²⁰ An up-to-date treatment can be found in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism; an Alternative to 'Left Behind' Eschatology*, ed. Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung (Baker Academic, 2009).

¹²¹ Steve Gregg (32) credits Samuel R. Maitland (1792-1866) as the one responsible for the "official entrance" of the futurist approach to Revelation around 1827. Maitland was an Anglican historian who had been trained at Cambridge. From 1823-27, he was perpetual curate of Christ Church, Gloucester, and at one time served as librarian to the archbishop of Canterbury.

In addition to Maitland's influence, the futurist approach was given further impetus in Europe through the influence of Isaac Williams in England (*The Apocalypse* [London, 1852]), and on the continent through the efforts of C. Stern (*Commentar u. die Offenbarung* [Schaffhausen, 1854]) and A. Bisping (*Erklärung der Apocalypse* [Munster, 1876]).

Since scholars of varying millennial positions hold the futurist approach, it is not surprising that there would be variation in matters of detail. Furthermore, there are those who would not be considered strictly futurists. Robert Mounce and Alan Johnson, for instance, combine the futurist approach with the preterist. Nevertheless, the distinctive feature of the futurist approach remains, i.e., most of the events described in chapters 4ff. await a time shortly before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for fulfillment. This is surely the most sensible approach to the book, though there will certainly be spiritual lessons for believers of all ages.

Appendix E Where the Dead Go

1. Believers who die now do not go to Hades but to Heaven to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:5-9) and the angels (Heb. 12:22, 23) at the altar of God (Rev. 6:9-11). “Whereas ‘paradise’ in the gospel account (Luke 23:43) referred to the section of Hades reserved for the righteous, by the time Paul wrote 2 Cor. 12:2-4, it was assumed that paradise had been taken out of Hades and was now placed in the third heaven” (Morey, 86). Several confessions teach that believers go directly to Christ now at death: the Heidelberg Catechism, Westminster Confession, and Second Helvetic Confession (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 679).
2. “According to the post-resurrection teaching in the New Testament, the believer now goes to heaven at death to await the coming resurrection and the eternal state. But what of the wicked? The wicked at death descend into Hades, which is a place of temporary torment while they await the coming resurrection and their eternal torment... (2 Pet. 2:9)...until Hades is emptied of its inhabitants... (Rev. 20:13-15)” (Morey, 86-87). Thus, so far, no one has ever gone to hell.
3. Pertinent Terms (summarizing Robert Morey, *Death and the Afterlife*, 72-93)

a. *Sheol* = Underworld (Hebrew)

- 1) Usage: “The Hebrew word *Sheol* is found 66 times in the Old Testament. While the Old Testament consistently refers to the body as going to the grave, it always refers to the soul or spirit of man as going to *Sheol*” (Morey, 72). Paul Enns disagrees, saying that the OT concept includes the grave and where good and bad people go after death (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, 374).
- 2) Lexical Meaning: “the underworld... whither man descends at death” (BDB [Brown, Driver, Briggs] 982).
- 3) KJV Confusion: The KJV mistranslates *Sheol* as “grave” (31 times), “hell” (31 times), and “pit” (3 times). But *Sheol* cannot mean “grave” for several reasons. At least 20 contrasts exist between *Sheol* and the grave (Morey, 76-77)...
 - a) OT writers always use the word *kever* when they speak of the grave. Never are *Sheol* and *kever* (“grave”) used as synonymous (e.g., in parallelism).
 - b) The LXX never translates *Sheol* as “grave” (Gr. *mneema*) nor *kever* as Hades.
- 4) Sections: *Sheol* has two different parts, including a “lowest part”: “For a fire is kindled in my anger, and burns to the lowest part of *Sheol*” (Deut. 32:22 NASB; cf. Morey, 78).

b. *Hades* = Underworld (Greek)

- 1) Usage: *Hades* (ᾍδης) is the Greek counterpart for the Hebrew *Sheol*. “In the Septuagint, *Hades* is found 71 times. It is the Greek equivalent of *Sheol* 64 times. The other seven times... it is the translation of other Hebrew words, some of which shed significant light on what *Hades* meant to the translators of the Septuagint” (Morey, 81). These seven include Job 33:22; 38:17; Prov. 2:18.

The NT uses the word 11 times, the most significant being in Acts 2:27, 31, where Peter quotes the prophecy about Christ in Psalm 16:10, “Thou wilt not abandon my soul to *Sheol*” (NASB), using the Greek *Hades* for the Hebrew *Sheol*—thus equating the terms. Unfortunately, here, the NIV mistranslates *Hades* as “grave.”

- 2) Lexical Meaning: “the underworld as the place of the dead” (BAGD 16).
- 3) KJV Confusion: “The KJV mistranslated the word Hades in every occurrence just as it did with the word Sheol” (Morey, 83). Hades does not mean “death” (*thanatos*, Rev. 1:18), nor “grave” (*mnemea*), nor “hell” (*Gehenna*), nor “heaven” (*ouranos*), nor the place of eternal bliss for the righteous (the new heavens and the new earth; Rev. 21:1). Hades simply means the place of the disembodied spirits.
- 4) Sections: Before Christ’s death, *Sheol-Hades* had two different sections, or compartments: a place of torment for the wicked (specifically called Hades; Luke 16:23) and a place of conscious bliss for the righteous (“Paradise,” or “Abraham’s bosom”; Luke 16:22). It was often referred to as a dual compartment place in the intertestamental era (Morey, 84).

However, in Hades after His death (Acts 2:31), Christ proclaimed his resurrection to “spirits now in prison” (1 Pet. 3:18-22). Christ took the righteous out of Hades and brought them to heaven (Eph. 4:8-9; *ibid*, 86). One of the most problematic NT passages is 1 Peter 3:18-22, which states that after His death, Christ “preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago...” See the preceding pages.

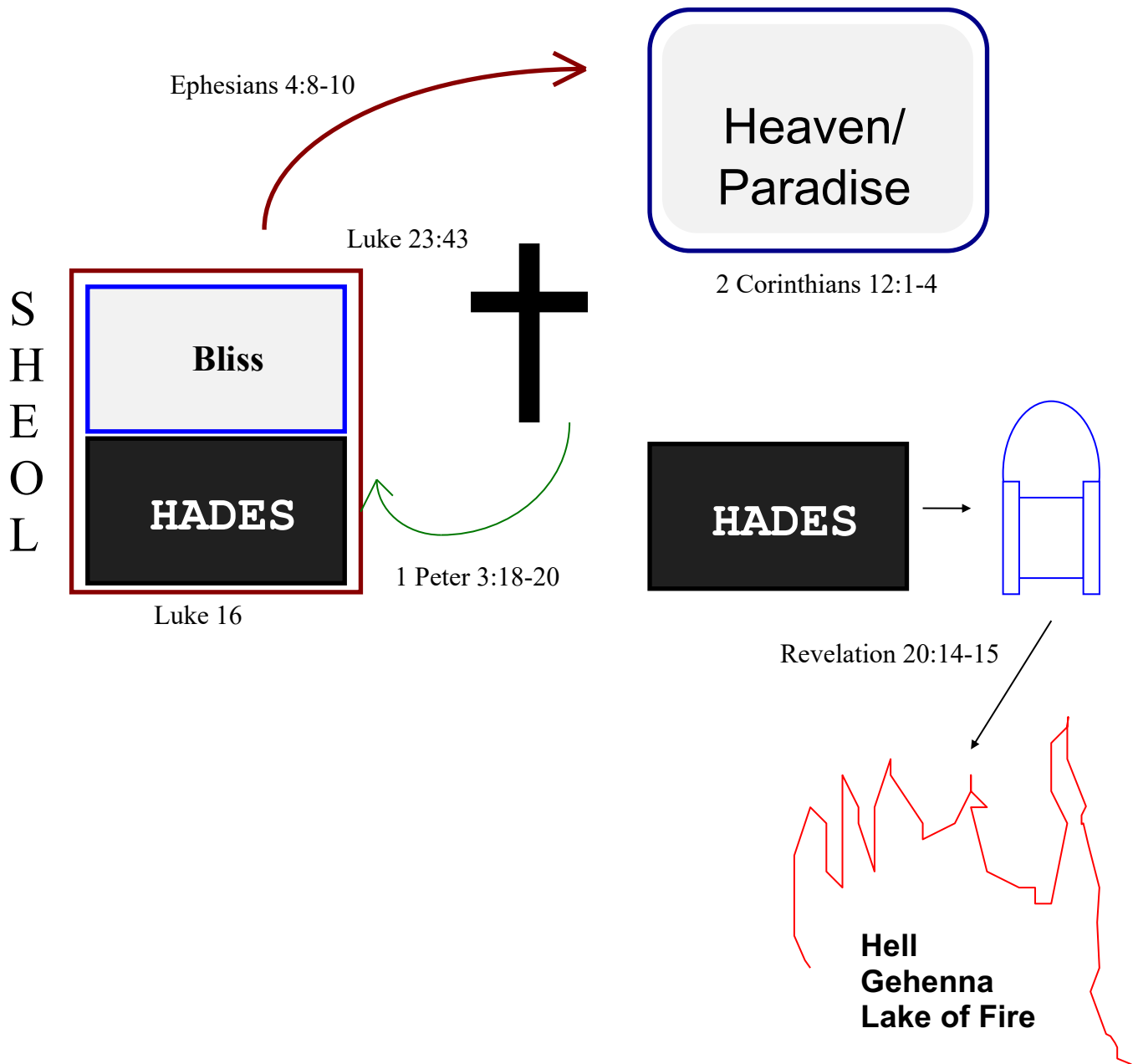
c. Gehenna = Hell (Greek)

- 1) Usage: *Gehenna* is found 12 times in the NT with the meaning of “hell.” It describes the ultimate fate of the wicked (the lake of fire, Rev. 20:14-15) after the Great White Throne Judgment. *Gehenna* is the Greek equivalent for “the valley of Hinnom” (Josh. 15:8; 18:16; Neh. 11:30), which was the dump outside Jerusalem where people tossed garbage and unclean corpses. Here, “the fires never stopped burning, and the worms never stopped eating” (Morey, 87).
- 2) Lexical Meaning: “The place of judgment” (BAGD 152).
- 3) KJV: The KJV correctly translates *Gehenna* as “hell” in every instance. Unfortunately, whereas Berkhof (p. 680), the Westminster Confession, and the Second Helvetic Confession correctly identify the place of the believer after death, they all incorrectly cite that unbelievers presently enter hell at death.
- 4) Sections: No sections are specified in Scripture, although Christ intimated that there would be different degrees of punishment after death (Matt. 11:20-24).

Summary: Where Did/Do the Deceased Go?

	Before the Death of Christ	After the Death of Christ
All People	Sheol-Hades, a “dual compartment” place (Luke 16)	Paradise compartment emptied of OT saints and brought to Heaven (Eph. 4:8; Prov. 15:24; Matt. 27:50-53; Rom. 10:7; Heb. 12:23; 2 Cor. 12:1-4; Rev. 1:18)
Believers	Paradise or “Abraham’s side” in Hades (Luke 16:22; 23:43)	Christ’s presence in Heaven (Acts 7:55, 59; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8)
Unbelievers	Place of torment in Hades (Luke 16:23)	Place of torment = Hades (2 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 6:8)

The Transfer to Paradise



2. If dead believers go to Christ and dead unbelievers go to Hades but the resurrection of their bodies comes later (cf. Eschatology, 160), are they then bodiless until the resurrection?
 - a. No, for perhaps all the saved have an intermediate body (e.g., Moses in Luke 9:30).

Certain texts strongly intimate that there is such a body. There is “a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1, KJV). This body is said to be eternal because it is finally merged with the resurrection body at the time of the resurrection. The preparation of the intermediate body is a miraculous operation of God. Therefore, to be clothed with this body during the intermediate state will not leave one naked (2 Cor. 5:2-4, KJV). This may be part of the explanation for the Old Testament saints who came out of their graves after the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 27:50-53, KJV). This may also explain the white robes of the tribulation martyrs under the altar (Rev 6:9-22; cf. Rev 7:9, 14, KJV)” (from Hoyt, 47).
 - b. Likewise, by implication, every unbeliever must also have an intermediate body that experiences pain and torment (?)—unless this can be felt by a soul alone (?).
3. In light of the preceding Scripture, the Bible refutes all of the following erroneous intermediate state philosophies (see Eschatology, 163-70; Erickson, 1176f.; Hoyt, 47; Berkhof, 686-94):
 - a. Universalism: all persons upon earth will be saved regardless of their belief (held by liberalism). See my response at Eschatology, 163.
 - b. Annihilationism: the soul of unbelievers is not immortal and will die; thus, the punishment for sin is missing out on heaven since there is no eternal hell (held by Jehovah’s Witnesses and “evangelicals” such as F. F. Bruce, John Stott, Clark Pinnock, and Philip Hughes). See my response at Eschatology, 164-67.
 - c. Soul-Sleep: the soul cannot be conscious without a body; “the condition of man in death is one of unconsciousness... all men, good and evil alike, remain in the grave from death to the resurrection” (*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* [Review & Herald, 1957], 13; cited by Millard Erickson, 1176).

Response (cf. Eschatology, 170):

- 1) Consciousness after death is revealed repeatedly: “remember” (Luke 16:25), “today” (Luke 23:43), Stephen’s prayer (Acts 7:59), OT persons (Matt. 17:1-8).
 - 2) Pain is experienced after death (Luke 16:24)
 - 3) After death, Christians “live together with” Christ (1 Thess. 5:10; cf. Luke 20:38; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:6, 8), so a soul sleep is impossible.
 - 4) Why would a soul need to sleep? Isn’t sleep a bodily function—not of the soul? How could a disembodied soul sleep? Sleep is a euphemism for death (Matt. 9:24; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13-15).
 - 5) A body is unnecessary for consciousness (Holy Spirit, Father, angels, demons).
- d. Purgatory: an additional place for cleansing “venial” sins (but not mortal sins) between death and the resurrection awaits those who “are in a state of grace but not yet spiritually perfect”; it is “a state of temporary punishment for those who, departing this life in the grace of God, are not entirely free from venial sins or have not yet fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions” (Joseph Pohle, *Eschatology or The Catholic Doctrine of the Last Things: A Dogmatic Treatise* [St. Louis: B. Herder, 1917], 18). [Notice *who* pays for sin!] A related doctrine is that of *limbus infantium*, whereby unbaptized babies suffer punishment for original sin, which is the loss of beatific vision or the presence of God, but they are not punished for *actual* sin. They also think Matt. 12:32 teaches forgiveness after death.

Response (cf. Eschatology, 167): The dead have a fixed state (Heb. 9:27) with no crossing over from one place to another (Luke 16:26). Matt. 12:32 teaches *no* forgiveness later.

- e. Reincarnation: the intermediate state is experienced repeatedly between various times an individual lives on earth (held by Hindus, New Agers, and many others). See my four-page study at Eschatology, 17a-d.